The Dissertation Committee for James Edward Warren certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Literary Knowledge in the Reader:

English Professors Processing Poetry and Constructing Arguments

Committee:

_____

Davida Charney, Supervisor

_____

Linda Ferreira-Buckley

_____

Jacqueline Henkel

_____

Steven Mailloux

_____

Diane Schallert

_____

Jeffrey Walker

Literary Knowledge in the Reader:

English Professors Processing Poetry and Constructing Arguments

by

James Edward Warren, Jr., B.A., M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2006

Literary Knowledge in the Reader:

English Professors Processing Poetry and Constructing Arguments

Publication No. _____

James Edward Warren, Jr., Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2006

Supervisor: Davida Charney

This dissertation brings together aspects of writing-in-the-disciplines research, reader-response theory, and empirical reading research in an investigation of literary scholars reading poems and constructing arguments. I begin with a review of literary criticism published over the past 70 years on Donne's "The Flea," Milton's "Song: On May Morning," Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," and Eliot's "Conversation Galante." This review suggests that certain New Critical interpretive conventions persist in scholarship. In particular, literary scholars continue to read lyrics as dramatic utterances and as organic wholes. I then present findings from a think-aloud study in which English professors read the aforementioned poems and planned a hypothetical conference talk about them for the MLA conference. Reader-response theorists have argued that readers activate certain text-making conventions in order to read literature *as literature*. In my

study, participants' disciplinary reading conventions were so deeply ingrained that their initial processing of the four poems mirrored the interpretive patterns in published criticism of those poems. Next I analyze the think-aloud data and follow-up interviews from the perspective of writing-in-the-disciplines research. Previous researchers found that scholarly literary argument relies on a limited set of special topoi and is not always directed toward the accumulation of new knowledge. The scholars in my study relied more heavily on some topoi during initial interpretation of the poems, while other topoi were used more often during argument planning. The picture of literary argument that emerges is a hybrid of ceremonial rhetoric and communal knowledge building. Finally, I analyze the think-aloud data from the vantage-point of expert/novice research in cognitive psychology. Previous researchers have used the term "generic expertise" to describe expert knowledge that all members of an academic discipline possess. Despite the belief of some within literary studies that their discipline lacks a core, participants in my study demonstrated generic expertise both in their interpretations of poems and in their argument planning. I conclude by arguing that previous descriptions of scholarly literary argument need to be revised. Literary scholars relate to their objects of study in a unique way that ensures the distinctness of literary argument.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

At the 2004 Modern Language Association convention in Philadelphia, the Presidential Forum addressed the future of scholarship in the humanities; prominent literature professors lamented that scholars in their field, in the words of Louis Menand, "have almost completely failed at explaining what they do" (2005, p. 13). In recent years writing-in-the-disciplines researchers have begun to study "what literature professors do" in scholarly articles (Bazerman, 1988; Fahnestock & Secor, 1988, 1991; MacDonald, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1994; Wilder, 2005). These studies have contributed much to our understanding of the *textual* forms of literary argument, but they do not tell us how literary professionals process primary texts and plan scholarly arguments. Descriptions of text-processing are crucial to our understanding of scholarship in literary studies because, perhaps more than in any other discipline, reading processes *are* the primary method of investigation in the field. My dissertation complements previous analyses of scholarly articles by investigating the reading-to-write processes of established literary scholars.

Writing/Reading-in-the-Disciplines and Literary Knowledge

In rhetoric and composition studies, writing-in-the-disciplines research emerged to study how writing functions to establish and advance knowledge in academic disciplines. For the purposes of this research, a "discipline" is defined less by its subject matter, methods, and theory than by the institutional structure and practices of the university, in which faculty are grouped together in departments, serve on committees together, teach the same population of students, and publish in a limited set of

professional journals. Writing-in-the-disciplines researchers reject foundationalist assumptions about knowledge, but they also recognize that professional academic writing still functions primarily to construct and negotiate knowledge claims. As Susan Peck MacDonald (1994) puts it, "even if knowledge making does not occur in a pure, objective form, the goal of creating knowledge still makes academic writing different from, for instance, murder mysteries or technical instructions" (p. 10). Studies of professional academic writing in the physical sciences (Bazerman, 1988; Blakeslee, 1993; Dowdey, 1992; Fahnestock & Secor, 1988; Fahnestock, 1999; Myers, 1990), engineering (Herrington, 1985; Winsor, 1996), the social sciences (Hansen, 1988; Herrington, 1992), and the humanities (Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988; Fahnestock & Secor, 1988, 1991; Hyland, 2001; MacDonald, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1994; Wilder, 2002, 2005) have shown that even when members of a discipline disagree on fundamental philosophical issues, they share certain text-making conventions that identify them as members of the same knowledge-making community.

As a complement to writing-in-the-disciplines research, a number of studies have used process research methods to investigate how professionals and pre-professionals *read* academic texts. For example, Haas and Flower (1988) found that college freshmen were just as likely as graduate students to recall knowledge statements made in a textbook, but they failed to construct a rhetorical situation to explain how knowledge statements get made. Graduate students, on the other hand, built "a rhetorical situation for the text, trying to account for author's purpose, context, and effect on the audience" (p. 176). These results are supported by Haas' (1994) longitudinal study of an undergraduate

as she progressed toward a biology degree over a 4-year period. In her freshman and sophomore years, the student read with scant attention to context and instead attempted to memorize "what the book says." By her senior year, however, the student's reading habits had begun to include "representation of authors as active, motivated agents and a cognizance of the historical, situational, and intertextual contexts supporting both readers and writers" (p. 74). In yet another revealing study, Penrose and Geisler (1994) asked a college freshman and a doctoral student in philosophy to read eight philosophy articles on the same controversial issue and to write a paper summarizing the current thinking on that issue. The doctoral student read the articles as authored and composed of knowledge claims that could be evaluated and answered through his own writing. The freshman, in contrast, consistently referred to "the book," rather than specific authors, and she viewed the articles as a definitive source, rather than as a collection of arguable claims of varying quality.

The rhetorical reading of academic texts becomes more prominent as students progress through college, and rhetorical sophistication becomes even greater as individuals learn the knowledge-making conventions of particular disciplines. Bazerman (1988) found that practicing physicists read articles in their field as if they were engaged in argument, responding emotionally to things they read, refusing to read articles in the order they were written, and making quick assessments of the usefulness and quality of articles based on contextual clues such as title, method, or authorship. Charney (1993) produced similar findings when she asked three professionals in evolutionary science to read an unconventional article in their field. In her words, scientists "read as is

convenient for their own purposes (they read parts selectively and out of order); they weigh the plausibility of claims and evidence; they struggle to understand unfamiliar technical terms; they cheer and get mad" (p. 228). Nor are these sorts of reading habits limited to professional scientists, as Lundeberg (1987) found that, when confronted with a case, legal experts immediately look for contextual clues like the court, date, and judge of the decision, and they make evaluative comments based on these indicators. As for professionals in the humanities, Wineburg (1991, 1994, 1998) found that historians always note the source of a historical document before reading it, and as they read, they "pretend to deliberate with others by talking to themselves" (1991, p. 503).

Although the majority of writing/reading-in-the-disciplines research has targeted scientific and technical texts, recent analyses of scholarly articles in literary studies have shown that they, too, are characterized by discipline-specific features. The first researchers to analyze scholarly articles in literary studies compared them to research articles in the sciences and concluded that literary criticism is not directed toward the accumulation of new knowledge. Bazerman (1988) compared a 1978 *PMLA* article with exemplary articles in molecular biology and sociology and found that, whereas the scientific articles attempted to solve disciplinary problems and then advance beyond them, the literary studies article attempted to complicate understanding of a Wordsworth sonnet, to avoid "taming its subject by creating a representation that will count as knowledge" (p. 39). Along these same lines, MacDonald (1987, 1989, 1992, 1994) examined four New Historicist articles published in the 1980s and found little sense of disciplinary "progress." The writers worked on "diffuse," isolated disciplinary problems

and made little attempt to relate their inquiries to other research in the field. Fahnestock and Secor (1991) addressed a larger sample of work in literary studies, analyzing 20 articles from 10 different journals published between 1978 and 1982. Like Bazerman and MacDonald, they found scarce evidence of progressive knowledge building and termed literary argument "epideictic" in the sense that it is intended to celebrate a fairly stable set of values and texts. According to Fahnestock and Secor, literary criticism assumes the irreducible complexity of literature, which prevents literary phenomena from being reduced and condensed in the manner required for progressive knowledge building.

This portrayal of literary argument as an enterprise that rejects the goal of communal knowledge building is based on analyses of scholarly articles written in the 1970s and 1980s; analyses of more recent work in literary studies suggest that the field may be moving more toward a model of progressive knowledge building. In Wilder's (2005) replication of Fahnestock and Secor's (1991) study using a sample of articles published between 1999 and 2001, she found that critics took great care to ground their interpretations in well-documented historical and cultural contexts. This finding calls into question Fahnestock and Secor's argument that the mere search for deeper meanings matters most in literary argument and that critics do not differentiate between "found" and "constructed" realities in texts (p. 85). Wilder also found that critics related their arguments to previous work in the field, which she argues indicates a shift away from isolated criticism and toward communal knowledge building (p. 111). Finally, Wilder observed an increased use of conceptual frames to interpret literature, leading her to speculate that literary studies may be reconfiguring itself as a knowledge-building

community in which general theories are used to explain texts and texts are used to refine general theories (p. 94).

These inconsistencies between Fahnestock and Secor's and Wilder's findings raise important questions about literary argument and its evolution. When writing for an audience of colleagues, are literary critics more concerned with the originality of their interpretations or with their validity according to disciplinary standards? Is Wilder correct that literary scholars have increased their emphasis on knowledge building over the past 20 years? My dissertation attempts to answer these questions by examining the reading and writing processes of professional literary scholars. Textual analysis goes only so far in describing how knowledge claims are negotiated among members of an academic community. As Bazerman (1988) notes upon observing the reading habits of physicists, there is "strong evidence for the priority of one's individual schema in evaluating results over an absolute, textually based standard. That is, arguments are generally evaluated not with respect to the correctness of the entire argument, but to how the reader can assimilate pieces into ongoing work" (p. 249). Process research methods are especially useful for studying the ways literary critics make knowledge, for while analyses of published articles can reveal the *execution* of literary arguments, only studies of professionals at work can reveal the inventional processes by which scholars arrive at those arguments.

Reader Response and Literary Knowledge

Literary scholars themselves have made important contributions to our understanding of how English professors make knowledge by way of their reading

processes. Theorists grouped together under the umbrella term, "reader response," inhabit a long tradition of speculation, beginning at least with Plato and Aristotle, about how readers respond to imaginative texts. Reader-oriented academic criticism dates back to I.A. Richards (1929), who saw the value in studying readers, as well as texts themselves. Reading researchers in cognitive psychology have argued that reader-response theory is limited by its failure to investigate actual readers and its reliance on introspection, which does not always accurately describe processing as it occurs. On the other hand, the reflections of scholars themselves can attain a level of depth and authenticity sometimes missing from controlled studies.

Steven Mailloux (1990) has written that the goal of reader-response theory "is to talk more about readers than about authors and texts" (p. 38), but rarely has this "talk" included empirical investigations of actual readers. Early response-oriented critics, such as Walker Gibson (1950) and Wayne Booth (1961), remained committed to close textual analysis. Gibson (1950) argued that literature is best described as the experience of a "mock reader," but this reader is a formal feature of the text that has been constructed by the author. Similarly, Booth argued that it is fallacious to discuss literary effects without considering the author who created them and the reader who must activate them, but the object of study is still the text, wherein lies the author's carefully constructed images of himself and his reader. Conversely, late reader-response theorists like Jonathan Culler (1975) and Stanley Fish (1980) studied only large discourse structures that inform the reading processes of entire communities. Drawing on French structuralism and a Chomskyan notion of linguistic competence, Culler argued that the primary goal of

criticism should be "to construct a theory of literary discourse which would account for the possibilities of interpretation" (p. 119), rather than simply continue the proliferation of individual interpretations. To this end, Culler sketched out various conventions a reader must activate in order to read a text as literature, and in the process, he helped shift attention away from the text itself and toward what the reader brings to the text. In a similar vein, Fish described literary reading as a matter of activating the conventions of particular "interpretive communities." This theory develops Culler's notion of "literary competence" even further, for Fish's claim that interpretive disagreements result from conflicting community standards accounts for differences in interpretation in a way that Culler's monolithic reading conventions did not. For my purposes, the important limitation of Culler and Fish's work is that neither entailed investigations of actual readers.

For a brief period in the 1970s, reader-response theorists did investigate the processes of actual readers. Prior to his development of the idea of interpretive communities, Fish (1970) had criticized text-centered criticism because it limits interpretation to that which remains after the reading process is finished. In response, Fish developed "affective stylistics" to "slow down the reading experience so that 'events' one does not notice in normal time, but which do occur, are brought before our analytical attentions" (p. 28). The potential of affective stylistics was never realized because Fish only applied the method to a psychologically blank version of himself. Mailloux (1990) has argued convincingly that the specter of interpretive relativism haunted reader-response theorists throughout the 1970s, and this may help explain why

Fish never investigated individual readers. To the objection that the temporal experiences of readers are idiosyncratic, Fish responded that "informed readers" possess an internal, Chomsky-like system of rules that ensures consistency among reading experiences. This notion of shared competence allowed Fish to answer charges of relativism, but it also eliminated any need to investigate actual readers. In a theory that attributed more active roles to readers than did affective stylistics, Wolfgang Iser (1974; 1978) described the reading process as creative gap-filling, in which readers co-create the literary experience by responding to an author's "intersubjectively verifiable instructions for meaning-production" (1978, p. 25). Iser differed from Fish in that he hoped "to devise a framework for mapping out and guiding empirical studies of reader reaction" (p. x), though neither he nor Fish wound up conducting such studies themselves.

The two reader-response theorists who did study actual readers were Norman Holland (1975) and David Bleich (1975; 1978). Holland argued that "only after we have understood how some specific individual responds . . . can we begin to formulate general hypotheses about the way many or all readers respond" (1975, p. 12). Holland audio taped conversations with 5 undergraduate English majors as they responded to 10 short stories, and then analyzed the transcripts through the lens of psychoanalysis. His conclusion that a reader's "identity theme" produces unique interpretations made him vulnerable to charges of rampant subjectivism, for unlike Culler, Fish, and Iser, Holland did not introduce interpretive constraints or explain how interpretive agreement arises. Like Holland, Bleich proposed a method of investigation in which "the object of attention is not the item itself but is the response of those who observe it" (1978, p. 98), and he

analyzed written and spoken responses of students collected over a 6-year period. Whereas Holland applied psychoanalytic theory to his data, Bleich borrowed concepts from epistemology. He argued that readers gain meaning from marks on the page through a process of "symbolization," producing information that is then reprocessed through "resymbolization," which results in spoken or written texts that others then interpret by similar means. Bleich was even more vulnerable than Holland to charges of interpretive relativism, as he stated explicitly that "reading is a wholly subjective process" and "the nature of what is perceived is determined by the rules of the personality of the perceiver" (1975, p. 3). One can argue with Holland and Bleich's theories of text processing and methods of data collection, but for my purposes, the biggest drawback of their work is that it did not lead to a sustained program of research.

Why did reader-response theory produce so few investigations of actual readers? One intriguing answer, provided by Mailloux (1990), is that reader-response theorists were not so much interested in reading processes as they were in debating a purely theoretical question: "is it the reader or the text that determines interpretation?" (p. 41) Mailloux goes on to speculate that the desire to pursue this theoretical conversation may explain why reader-response theorists virtually ignored the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1938; 1978), who had long since set aside questions about whether meaning resides in the text or the reader. Instead, Rosenblatt favored direct investigations of readers (generally students) in order to improve reading instruction. Rosenblatt argued that "the student's rudimentary response is, perforce, part of our teaching materials" (p. 51). We might speculate that reader response is also part of our *research* materials, according to

Rosenblatt's views. In fact, reading researchers in cognitive psychology cite Rosenblatt's work more frequently than any other writer associated with response-oriented work in English.

My dissertation brings together three strands of reader-response theory whose potential has not been fully realized. First, I extend the work of Holland (1975) and Bleich (1975; 1978) by investigating the responses of actual readers. Second, I revive Fish's (1970) attempts to analyze reading events as they occur in real time. The *goal* of affective stylistics was not rejected so much as Fish's *method*, and methodological refinements in process research over the past 35 years warrant new investigations in this area. My dissertation's third, and most important, connection to reader-response theory is its relation to Mailloux's (1982; 1989; 1990) "rhetorical hermeneutics," which is the most valuable current line of research to arise from reader-response theory. Following Rosenblatt (1938; 1978), Mailloux (1990) set aside epistemological questions in an attempt "to change the subject of interpretive theory from talk about readers approximating texts to talk about interpreters arguing over meanings" (p. 52). Mailloux's own work is primarily historical, but there is no obvious reason his call "to provide a fine-grained description of a particular interpretive act in a particular institutional setting" (p. 53) cannot be answered using process research methods. Like Mailloux, I am not interested in the epistemological question of whether meaning is determined by the text or by the reader. Instead, I attempt to provide a snapshot of the reading and writing processes of literature professors working in a specific time, place, and situation.

Expert Reading and Literary Knowledge

A third source of knowledge about how experts read literature comes from empirical studies in cognitive psychology. "Expertise," in this context, is defined as skills acquired over time from an accumulation of domain-specific knowledge and methods (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson & Smith, 1991). For scholars in English and rhetoric, the value of these studies is limited by their controlled environments, which distort the contexts of authentic practices. Empirical studies do offer the advantage of testing reader-response theories with real readers, however, and the sheer number of studies has bolstered the reliability of results.

Studies that compare more and less experienced (i.e., expert and novice) readers of poetry have shed light on the process by which individuals learn to read poems in ways that are privileged institutionally. For example, Dias (1986) studied two classes of 9th-graders as they read poetry and found that, in general, they read poetic discourse as if it were strange prose, ignoring poetic devices in their attempts to understand the plain sense meaning of poems. Similar results were produced with 10th-graders by Harker (1994), who characterized his participants' interpretations as "essentially prose translations of the poems' literal meanings" (p. 206). By the time they reach college, however, students activate special interpretive strategies, such as searching for significant meaning and paying special attention to figurative language, whenever they recognize a poem (Earthman, 1992; Eva-Wood, 2004a, 2004b; Hoffstaedter, 1987; Peskin, 1998; Shimron, 1980; Viehoff, 1986). The process by which individuals learn to poetry *as poetry* was captured nicely by Svensson (1987), who studied groups of 11-year-olds, 14-year-olds, and 18-year-olds in the same school system, finding that each group was increasingly

sensitive to figurative language.

The picture of expert poetry reading is more obscure, as only three studies (Earthman, 1992; Kintgen, 1983; Peskin, 1998) report on the performance of English postgraduates. The results of these studies are extremely valuable, however, because they provide empirical support for aspects of Culler (1975), Iser (1978), and Rosenblatt's (1978) theories. Kintgen and Peskin found that all their graduate student participants read poems in the way Culler predicts, as unified wholes that rely on coherent metaphors and express a significant attitude toward the world. In fact, although graduate students in Peskin's study were much more adept than high-school students at *applying* Culler's "rule of significance," "convention of metaphorical coherence," and "convention of thematic unity" (p. 115), the high-school students did adhere to these reading conventions. Similarly, Earthman found that both college freshmen and English graduate students engaged in the "gap-filling" that, according to Iser, literary reading requires. Also, both groups kept open the multiple perspectives that, according to Iser and Rosenblatt, are available in literary works. Graduate students were, however, more likely to work with gaps that were difficult to fill and to assume multiple perspectives.

My dissertation addresses two main gaps in the body of research on expert poetry reading. First, no study has examined the reading processes of practicing literary scholars, which is significant because studies of other fields (e.g., Charney, 1993) have shown that professionals read quite differently from graduate students. Second, as Graves (1996) noted, empirical studies of poetry reading have lacked ecological validity, with participants being asked to make sense of unfamiliar poems without any expectation of

writing about or discussing them. But English professors read literature for highly specific professional purposes, usually either teaching or scholarship. My project approximates an authentic context for scholarly work while adhering to methodological standards for empirical research.

Plan of Dissertation Chapters

My dissertation begins with a review of literary criticism published on four poems (Donne's "The Flea," Milton's "Song: On May Morning," Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," Eliot's "Conversation Galante") since 1938, the original publication year of Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry*. The larger purpose of Chapter 1, "Dramatic Speakers and Organic Wholes: Enduring Conventions in the Criticism of 4 Lyrics**,**" is to present the field's collected knowledge on the four poems used in the think-aloud study that is the hub of my dissertation. Within Chapter 1, I argue that New Critical practices of lyric interpretation persist in published criticism. Although the New Critical theory of lyric has been rejected, the rhetorical necessity of answering previous interpretations means that certain New Critical interpretive conventions continue to appear in scholarship. Also, because New Critics tended to be more interested in practical criticism than theory, certain rhetorical maneuvers remain useful to scholars when they produce written interpretations of lyric poems. In particular, the assumption that all lyrics represent the utterance of a dramatic speaker, and the reading of all lyrics through the lens of modernist poetics, persist in contemporary criticism.

In Chapter 2, "Method," I describe the method of the 2-phase study that forms the core of my dissertation. The first phase of the study was a poetry familiarity survey that

allowed me to select poems and recruit participants for the think-aloud study. In phase two, 9 literature professors used a think-aloud procedure to read the four lyrics and compose a short text proposing a hypothetical conference talk about them for the MLA conference. Participants read one poem in each of the following four conditions: (1) familiar to them and close to their area of scholarly writing; (2) familiar to them and far from their area of scholarly writing; (3) unfamiliar to them and close to their area of scholarly writing; (4) unfamiliar to them and far from their area of scholarly writing.

Chapter 3, "Scholarship in the Reader: 9 English Professors Processing 4 Poems," is the first of three chapters in which I analyze the results of the think-aloud study. This chapter most closely resembles Fish's (1970) affective stylistics in that I focus on how participants responded to formal features of the poems. Whereas Fish posited an ideal reader with no preconceptions about the text, however, I analyze participants' developing responses in conjunction with the field's collected knowledge on the poems, as reviewed in Chapter 1. I argue that, to a large extent, participants noticed and grappled with the same issues that have preoccupied critics in published interpretations of the poems. Also, participants adhered to New Critical conventions for lyric reading, and showed no inclination to assume the role of speaker, which has been advocated recently by a number of theorists seeking new ways to read lyric.

In Chapter 4, "Processing Poetry, Talking Topoi: A Study of Knowledge-Making in Literary Studies," I analyze think-aloud data and follow-up interviews from the perspective of writing-in-the-disciplines research. Fahnestock and Secor (1991) argued that scholarly literary argument relies on a limited set of special topoi and is not directed

toward the accumulation of new knowledge. In Wilder's (2005) update of this study, she argued that the makeup of the special topoi has changed and that literary criticism has shifted toward socially negotiated, progressive knowledge building. The scholars in my study relied more heavily on some topoi during initial interpretation of the poems, while other topoi were used more often to construct arguments. Also, some of the topoi were used for communal knowledge building, while others were used as audience appeals that may not reflect a commitment to knowledge building. The picture of literary argument that emerges from this study, then, is a hybrid of epideictic argument (as Fahnestock and Secor define it) and communal knowledge building.

In Chapter 5, "'Generic' and 'Specific' Expertise in English: An Expert/Expert Study in Poetry Interpretation and Academic Argument," I analyze the think-aloud data from the vantage-point of expert/novice research in cognitive psychology. Patel and Groen (1991) argue that we should expand the expert/novice framework to include "generic expertise," which relies on disciplinary knowledge that is not limited to a particular area of specialization, and "specific expertise," which draws on knowledge that only specialists possess. Generic expertise across fields is defined by the ability to represent field-specific problems accurately and efficiently; generic experts recognize *what* they need to know to solve a problem and *when* they lack this requisite knowledge. Participants in my study demonstrated generic expertise both in their interpretations of poems and in the planning of their arguments. They spoke more when interpreting familiar poems, but they were less inclined to develop an elaborate interpretation of unfamiliar poems for which they had little background knowledge. Participants spoke

less when developing arguments about the poems near their area of scholarly writing, as they were able to represent consensual knowledge quickly and identify a gap for their own contribution. When planning arguments for poems far from their area of specialization, participants spoke more as they struggled to construct a context for their arguments.

In my Conclusion, I argue that previous descriptions of literary argument as epideictic are misleading. These descriptions rely on an impoverished notion of epideictic argument, and, more important, do not describe accurately the work of literary scholars, neither those in print nor those studied here. I also argue that literary argument should not become more like scientific argument, as some writing-in-the-disciplines researchers have suggested. Scholarly literary arguments do share certain characteristics with scientific research arguments. But literary scholars relate to their objects of study in a way that is fundamentally different from the way scientists relate to theirs, and this difference ensures that literary argument will, and should, always remain distinct.

CHAPTER ONE:

Dramatic Speakers and Organic Wholes: Enduring Conventions in the Criticism of Four Lyrics

Over the past 25 years, a number of poststructuralist critics (e.g., Damon, 1993; Easthope, 1983; Grotjohn, 1991; Kalaidjian, 1989; Li, 1984; Saíz, 1989) have argued that lyric poetry protects the metaphysics of presence and the myth of individual autonomy while excluding history, ideology, society, and otherness.[1] Lyric scholars have responded by pointing out that the monological, ahistorical lyric criticized by poststructuralists is largely a New Critical invention that does not reflect the actual practices of poets throughout history.[2] Mark Jeffreys (1995) has reproved theorists for accepting the New Critics' transhistorical definition of lyric, noting that "in the context of the recent struggle to clear away New Critical poetics and to make room for a postmodernist poetics . . . lyric became metonymy for New Critical ideology" (p. 203). Virginia Jackson (2005) has gone further, writing that "both the genre [lyric] and the critical perspective [the New Criticism] on that genre came to stand for one another" (p. 93). The point of contention in this dispute is the definition of lyric—neither side defends the *New Critical* lyric. Both sides agree that New Critical theories of lyric are outdated and should be abandoned.

Both poststructuralist theorists and lyric scholars have revealed the inadequacies of New Critical theories of lyric, but neither has been clear about the extent to which

[1] It is difficult to say whether these critics believe that all lyric *necessarily* functions in this way. Often the term "lyric" is used as if its meaning were both transhistorical and agreed upon.
[2]For detailed histories of lyric practices, see Fowler (1982), Genette (1992), Hollander (1985), Johnson (1982), and Walker (1989).

New Critical practices continue to influence scholarly writing on individual poems. There are at least two reasons to believe this influence remains strong. First, because the New Critics were writing at a time when modern academic disciplines were being concretized, they (and really *all* major American formalists) were most concerned with installing a program that would foster the advancement of discipline-specific knowledge.[3] They were willing to use theoretically suspect critical conventions, so long as those conventions facilitated a body of discipline-specific knowledge statements. Conventions adopted for their usefulness in practical criticism, rather than their theoretical grounding, may continue to prove useful for contemporary scholars. A second, more significant reason New Critical conventions might persist has to do with the rhetorical necessities of scholarly argument. Scholars must always frame their arguments in terms of work that has come before them, and, in the context of responding to previous work, they may adopt the premises and conventions of their predecessors. In such a setting, critical conventions can survive well beyond the theories used to justify them in the first place.

In this chapter I will first describe briefly two major assumptions of New Critical theories of lyric: (1) lyrics are voiced by a dramatic speaker, and (2) lyrics achieve organic unity. Do these assumptions survive in contemporary criticism? How can we tell? To begin answering these questions, I review the published criticism from the past 70 years on four lyrics: John Milton's "Song: On May Morning"; John Donne's "The Flea"; Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"; and T.S. Eliot's "Conversation Galante." Finally, I will address the prospects and limitations of recent proposals to replace New

[3] See Graff (1987) for a detailed discussion of how American formalists attempted to make literary criticism a knowledge-producing field.

Critical approaches to lyric with one in which readers themselves assume the roles of speakers.

Lyric as the Utterance of a Dramatic Speaker

The theorists lumped together under the umbrella term "New Critic" often disagreed with one another, but most agreed that lyrics depict (or at least should be read as depicting) a speaker who is not necessarily the poet. In their enormously influential *Understanding Poetry* (1938), Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren declared that "every poem implies a speaker of the poem, either the poet writing in his own person or someone into whose mouth the poem is put" (p. liv). The New Critics conceded that sometimes the lyric speaker and poet are nearly synonymous, but they also asserted that we cannot always be certain when this is the case. Also, once poets commit themselves to poetic form, their poems represent, at best, only *versions* of themselves.[4] Consequently, as Laurence Perrine (1963) stated in a popular textbook, "a less risky course would be to assume always that the speaker is someone other than the poet" (p. 21). This assumption allowed the New Critics to objectify *all* lyrics as self-contained mini-dramas, freeing them from considerations of historical context. From a teaching standpoint, the New Critics could focus on "literature itself" simply by having students figure out what was happening with the dramatic speaker of poems (just as high school freshmen "learn" Shakespeare by deciphering the events in *Julius Caesar*). From the standpoint of scholarship, the device of the dramatic speaker created discipline-specific work in the form of explications. Jonathan Culler (1985) has summarized neatly the work of the New

[4] This argument was made most famously by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (1946) in "The Intentional Fallacy."

Critics both in the classroom and in scholarly writing:

> Now when we overhear an utterance that engages our attention, what we characteristically do is to imagine or reconstruct a context: identifying a tone of voice, we infer the posture, situation, intention, concerns, and attitudes of a speaker. This is, roughly, the approach to the lyric expounded and exemplified by the New Criticism. (p. 38)

The objections to this approach (and by extension lyric in general) have been too numerous for me to cover here, so I will mention only a few of the most influential. The deconstructionist Paul de Man (1984) argued that the act of reading lyric as dramatic utterance is an attempt to master language and eliminate the play of signifiers. For de Man, "lyric is not a genre, but one name among several to designate the defensive motion of the understanding, the possibility of a future hermeneutics" (p. 261). Along these same lines, Próspero Saíz (1989) cited lyric voicing as an attempt to privilege speech and thus protect the metaphysics of presence. Neo-Marxist Theodor Adorno (1974) claimed that lyric can function as social protest, but only when reading includes "a concrete inquiry into social content; no proper effort at understanding can satisfy itself with vague feelings of universality and inclusiveness" (p. 57). Perhaps more typical of the Marxist perspective is Antony Easthope (1983), who finds lyric an attempt to escape history and ideology, and the dramatic speaker an expression of the bourgeois myth of individual autonomy. As literary theory has become more socially responsive, many have been influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) deep suspicion of poetic discourse. Bakhtin's statements about poetry, in fact, could serve as an overview of various critiques of lyric

that have appeared in the past 25 years:

> The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. . . . The poet must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language . . . . [that strips] all aspects of language of the intentions and accents of other people, destroying all traces of social heteroglossia and diversity of language. (pp. 296, 297, 298)

Perhaps the most damning critique of the New Critical dramatic speaker is simply that it is ahistorical. Once the community of New Critics adopted a single method for reading *all* lyrics, Jackson (2005) observed, "the contingent details, referents, genres, enclosures, circumstances, addresses, occasions, secrets, and textures of [the poet's] work were collapsed into an idea of the lyric generated by that community" (p. 98).

Given these harsh critiques and the renewed emphasis on the cultural context of lyric poetry, what reason is there to think that literary critics still use the dramatic speaker as a reading device? One reason has to do with the convoluted history of the lyric genre. Jeffrey Walker (1989) has argued convincingly that we can trace the notion of lyric as personal utterance to Aristotle's bold insistence that *mimesis*, rather than versification, is the defining characteristic of poetry. According to Walker, Aristotle's contemporaries thought of lyric simply as epideictic argument in verse. By defining lyric as an *imitation* of oratory, rather than as a genuine *instance* of it, Aristotle initiated the modern conception of lyric as a "self-expressive outburst uttered by a speaker with his back turned to the reader/listener" (p. 13). Defining poetry as imitation, rather than versification, impacts lyric more strongly than epic or drama because these latter two

genres are *always* mimetic. Even if we drop the requirement that epic and drama be written in verse, we still recognize that the former depicts a fictional narrator and characters, and the latter depicts fictional characters. But with lyric, often we are unsure whether the speaker is the author or a fictional character. One way to explain this uncertainty is to say that sometimes poets write lyrics that are pre-Aristotelian, in the sense that they express the poet's own thoughts and are thus non-mimetic. At other times poets write lyrics that are clearly post-Aristotelian in their imitation of a speaker. The only way to know for sure whether a particular lyric is spoken by its author or a fictional character (except, perhaps, in the case of poems that are obviously dramatic, such as Browning's monologues) is to investigate its original context, and even that may not suffice. The device of the dramatic speaker, which allows us to bracket the question of whether the poem is spoken by the poet or a fictional character, may be simply too useful for critics to abandon.

Lyric as Organic Whole

The New Critics also objectified lyrics by focusing on the interrelation of their linguistic parts, a maneuver influenced by the "impersonal poetry" of modernists like Eliot and Pound. Eliot's (1932) desire "to divert interest from the poet to the poetry" (p. 11) helped define the New Critics' attempts to distinguish themselves from literary historians. Also, Eliot's descriptions of poetic activity—"forming new wholes . . . . [through a] heterogeneity of material compelled into unity" (pp. 247, 243)—helped define the task of New Critical explication: the demonstration of how poems reconcile disparate elements in organic unity. Just as the New Critics read a dramatic speaker into

all lyrics, they "reinterpreted and reevaluated earlier literature in the light of a modernist poetics" (Graff, 1987, p. 198), which meant assuming that all lyrics embody modernist ideals of organic unity. In fact, Julian Patrick (1985) has traced New Critical practices in general to modern poetry's specific needs for explication:

> From this need arose what are to us the familiar concepts, terms, and practices of the New Criticism: the 'organic form' implicit in the way one figure relates to another; the emphasis upon reconciliation, achieved through widely contrasting oppositions; the hierarchy of attitudes arising from such reconciliation; a characteristic analysis of metaphor to bring out its capacity to interpret reality; the use of the concept of analogy as a sophisticated substitute for a theory of reference . . . interpretation of poetic structure as above all a structure of meaning. (pp. 281-82)

Most objections to the device of the dramatic speaker also target the notion of organic unity, for it can be argued that both maneuvers limit openness, intertextuality, dialogism, and play. Unlike the device of the dramatic speaker, however, the trope of organic unity was highly controversial even during the height of the New Criticism. For example, Douglas Bush (1949) criticized the New Critics for "the reading of modern attitudes and ideas into the past" (p. 18), and R.S. Crane (1952) pointed out the impossibility of determining what is "internal" and "external" to a text, which is necessary to demonstrate a poem's organic wholeness. Decades later, Gerald Graff (1987) argued that the assumption of poems' organic unity meant that no interpretation was falsifiable, and "the fact that a previous commentator had taken some feature of a

text to be a defect was a challenge to the determined explicator to demonstrate that the feature in question harmonized with the text's internal structure" (p. 232). Graff also argued that, because demonstration of a poem's organic unity amounted to a celebration of its artistry, it became nearly impossible to criticize poems. This included political, social, or cultural criticism, which was off-limits because, after all, poems were assumed to be closed, autonomous systems.

Perhaps literary critics continue to use the device of the dramatic speaker out of practical necessity, but is there any reason to believe that the assumption of poems' organic unity, which has been panned for more than 50 years, persists in critical practice? According to Mary Poovey (2001), "the trope of the organic whole continues to organize most of the strains of criticism that now dominate U.S. practice" (p. 432), and even the poststructuralist reading of culture, sexuality, or ideology "converts its analytic objects into lyriclike organic wholes" (p. 432). Poovey has pointed to how, in the context of the research university, literary critics objectify texts in order to make knowledge claims like those advanced in scientific disciplines. Unlike scientists, however, most literary critics value the uniqueness of their objects of study. This leads to the belief that textual parts are interdependent with the whole, that changes to individual parts would cause significant changes to the whole. If Poovey is right, then perhaps critical practice continues to operate under the assumption of poems' organic wholeness, even though such terminology has long since disappeared.

How can we investigate these conjectures about the persistence of the dramatic speaker and organic unity in lyric criticism? One approach would be simply to look for

these conventions in an array of contemporary criticism. This synchronic approach is inadequate, however, because it fails to reveal ongoing patterns, or changes, in the scholarly conversation. A better approach is to trace the criticism of specific poems across time, which allows us to trace the evolution, or disappearance, of critical conventions.

Collected Criticism of Four Lyrics

To determine whether New Critical approaches to lyric persist in contemporary criticism, I reviewed all the criticism published since 1938 (the year Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* was first published) on Milton's "Song: On May Morning," Donne's "The Flea," Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," and Eliot's "Conversation Galante".[5] These poems are good choices for investigating the evolution of critical conventions for two main reasons. First, they represent a wide range of periods and forms: Donne's poem is a canonical dramatic lyric; Milton's poem is an early, youthful song; Hopkins' poem is an epiphanic sonnet; and Eliot's poem is an early symbolist effort. Variety is important because certain types of lyrics may lend themselves more readily to interpretations that rely on the dramatic speaker and organic unity. Second, all four poets have remained canonical over the past 70 years, which helps ensure that these poems have received sustained attention. To ensure that my review of criticism was comprehensive, I first consulted all available bibliographies of criticism for the four poets and every edition of the poets' collected works. For the years between the last year covered in bibliographies and the present, I consulted each year's edition of *Year's Work in English Studies.* From

[5] These poems were chosen originally for the study that informs subsequent chapters of the dissertation. In this study, 9 English professors read the four poems and composed a short text proposing a hypothetical conference talk about them for the MLA convention.

these sources I compiled a list of books and articles that provided extended interpretations of each poem, and then for each article I conducted a cited reference search using the online version of the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index.* The cited reference searches helped ensure that I had not overlooked any books or articles, and, most important, helped me gauge which pieces had been most influential. Below is my review of the criticism on each poem. Descriptions of the New Criticism often rely on a dichotomy between history and criticism that distorts the work of these scholars, many of whom produced literary history. That being said, I did weigh more heavily those interpretations that seemed more like pure criticism than literary history.

Criticism of Donne's "The Flea"

"The Flea" is the earliest of the four poems, written around 1600 and included in the first published collection of Donne's poems, the posthumous 1633 *Poems*. "The Flea" is a dramatic lyric, meaning the speaker is represented as addressing an actual person in a specific situation. I consulted over 50 different interpretations of "The Flea," distributed fairly evenly over the past 70 years.

The dramatic speaker in "The Flea" is highly individualized; he addresses another person, rather than a nonhuman entity; and the fictive situation is private, which gives the impression that we are overhearing an utterance. These characteristics may contribute to the fact that "The Flea" has received sustained critical attention over the past 70 years, the vast majority of which has followed precisely Culler's (1985) description of the New Critical approach to the dramatic speaker. Donne's love poems are ideal for the method of analysis Culler described because they feature situations involving complex characters,

characters who differ from one poem to the next. When the poems are coupled with Donne's complex biography (e.g., his own distinction between wild "Jack Donne" and austere "Doctor Donne," his secret marriage and subsequent imprisonment and ostracism, his conversion from Catholicism to Anglicanism), they help explain why, as Deborah Larson (1989) has written in her analysis of 20th century Donne criticism, "Donne is so recalcitrant and so rich a subject for literary criticism" (p. 137).

Although "The Flea" can be classified as a seduction poem, historically critics have argued that it depicts a speaker's display of wit rather than a genuine attempt at seduction (Bethell, 1962; Doniphan, 1951; Madison, 1957; Perrine, 1990; Richmond, 1964; Spacks, 1968; Wiggins, 1982; Winny, 1970). The speaker's tone must be ironic, the argument has gone, when he compares a flea to a "marriage bed and marriage temple" and argues that the mixing of two people's blood in a flea is equivalent to sex. Once these critics have established that the speaker's tone is not serious, they next consider the purpose of such an elaborate, feigned seduction. The consensus view has been that the poem should be read as a lighthearted battle of wits between (potential) lovers (Bethell, 1962; Cathcart, 1975; Doniphan, Marotti, 1986; Perrine, Richmond, Roston, 1974; Rudnytsky, 1982; Wiggins, Winny), as expressed by Arthur Madison: "The drama can then be looked upon as a little intellectual game indulged in by the two lovers, both of them knowing what the outcome will be, but enjoying the game for its sake" (p. 61). As Madison implies, speaker and listener must know beforehand how an *actual* seduction would end in order for the faux seduction to seem comical, and most critics have agreed that the outcome of the argument (although there is only one speaker, we can infer

something of the listener's response due to her implied actions between stanzas) is a foregone conclusion.

Although the speaker and listener may know how the "seduction" will end, we as readers do not, and critics have been divided on the question of whether the speaker succeeds. Because the speaker refers to the woman's potential "loss of maidenhead," some have argued that the female figure is a virgin who has rejected her male suitor repeatedly to the point of comedy (Doniphan, 1951; Perrine, 1990; Roston, 1974). As Laurence Perrine described the situation, "the young man has realized that her virtue is unshakable, yet keeps on inventing more and more preposterous reasons why she should yield to him, not expecting her to do so, but for the 'fun' of the thing" (p. 7). On the other hand, because the female listener indulges the male speaker's impudence, some critics have argued that the two already have a sexual relationship and are merely playing at seduction (Cathcart, 1975; Cruttwell, 1970; Madison, 1957; Wiggins, 1982). Dwight Cathcart, for example, asserted that "it is clear that they have agreed, with smiles, to end between the sheets" (p. 60). But because "The Flea" is assumed to be a battle of wits and not an actual seduction, most critics have disregarded the question of sex altogether and have focused instead on who wins the argument. By the end of the poem, the speaker seems to have lured the woman into admitting that the mingling of their bloods causes no harm, so most critics have declared him victorious (Cathcart, Doniphan, Madison, Perrine, Roston, Rudnytsky, 1982; Spacks, 1968; Wiggins, Winny, 1970). Peter De Sa Wiggins summed up this view of the poem's conclusion: "He has maneuvered her into admitting that neither her life nor her honor, in her own opinion, depends on her

virginity" (p. 280). This consensus is mitigated, however, by critics' disagreement regarding the seriousness of the woman's response (is she truly resisting, playing "straight man" to his outrageous conceit, or something in between?). Finally, because the woman destroys the flea without incident, some critics have maintained that *she* wins the argument by exposing the speaker's fallacious reasoning. Michael McCanles (1966) asserted that both the female listener and the reader of the poem defeat the speaker by forcing him from the realm of abstract reason: "But when the exercise in definition moves out of the logical realm and into the existential one of rhetoric we, like the lady, triumphantly crush the flea with no consequences" (p. 282).

In recent years critics have addressed gender representations in "The Flea," thus raising the stakes in the game between male speaker and female listener. The question is no longer whether the man or woman wins the lighthearted battle of wits, but whether the woman is dominated or empowered in the course of the exchange. Because the speaker manipulates, perhaps even humiliates, the woman through his sophistry, some critics have read the poem as an expression of male domination. Patricia Spacks (1968), for instance, asserted that the speaker only pretends to be playing, and the female listener's "unwillingness to perceive the underlying seriousness of her lover's play suggests her intellectual limitation" (p. 593). After the speaker lures the woman into killing the flea, thus "proving" that no harm will come of their sexual union, a "sharp tonal shift" occurs (p. 593), according to Spacks, and the poem ends with a "final contemptuous joke on the woman, as the speaker for the moment accepts her system of values and turns it against her" (p. 594). Thomas Docherty (1986) compared the movement of the speaker's

metaphors, in which the flea is tenor to vehicles of varying sizes (e.g., a bed, a temple, the Trinity), to the swelling and detumescence of the phallus, and in the poem, "what is at issue is the fact of male control of the female, through the telescopic manoeuvres of the phallus in sexual relation" (p. 56). These interpretations accord with feminist critiques of Donne's love poetry in general. Janel Mueller (1994) has argued that "a constitutive feature" of these lyrics is "the imperiousness of the subjectivity that utters itself into being" (p. 40), and in poems like "The Flea," Donne's "libertine speakers enact their conviction of male superiority" (p. 42).

An even more recent turn in Donne criticism, however, has found the female listener in "The Flea" to be an empowered, independent, active agent in the exchange. For example, Steve Larocco (1995) has argued that the speaker uses the flea as a site "to subvert the law and its desire to define and limit what is proper in sexual exchanges" (p. 260). Moreover, in the implied actions between stanzas, the flea "is not simply an appearance shaped or appropriated by the seducer; rather, it is a space which is also mobilized and contested by the woman, by the other" (p. 264). The significance of the flea is thus contested by speaker and listener in a manner that refuses closure; the woman "retains a silent autonomy throughout the poem and beyond its ending" that implies "the pleasures of seduction depend on the resistance, the challenge, the mobility and the power of the woman" (p. 267). According to Stephen Raynie (2001), the speaker uses fallacious flea metaphors to expose "the inappropriate link between honor as a limiting set of attributes and the respondent's body," thus prodding the woman to "assert ownership over her body" (p. 43). To be sure, the speaker hopes that the woman will

share her body with him upon asserting ownership of it, but ultimately the decision is hers, which "necessitates the ambiguity of the poem's success as a seduction" (p. 43). And Roy Roussel (1986) has argued that "the passivity of the woman in 'The Flea' is an illusion" (p. 20)—her actions between stanzas establish "a reciprocity between masculine and feminine which will assure their mutual understanding" (p. 26). These interpretations have not pretended that the speaker's motives are completely pure, nor have they resolved the conflict between the man and woman; they have, however, seen the woman as an equal combatant. In this regard, they accord with Ilona Bell's (1983) characterization of women throughout Donne's love poetry:

> Try as he may to sound scornful and cavalier, regardless of what he may say at any given moment, whether he professes indifference or canonizes love, Donne is never able to disregard the woman's point of view. The lady continues to disturb and check and alter the speaker's assumptions, even when he cockily tries to denigrate her point of view. (pp.116-17)

Criticism of "The Flea," then, has remained active throughout the past 70 years, but has neither exhausted the possibilities for new interpretations nor reached a consensus on some of the poem's most basic elements. Theresa DiPasquale (1995), in perhaps the most circumspect reading of "The Flea," presented two distinct interpretations herself before asserting that the poem "functions simultaneously on each of several mutually contradictory levels" and "as critics of the poem, we can insist on no one reading" (pp. 82, 90). But throughout all the interpretive disputes, all the changes in critical themes and terminology, critics have continued to conceive the poem as a fictional representation of a

man speaking in private to a woman. Virtually all published interpretations, even those whose primary purpose is to historicize the poem (e.g., Brumble, 1973; Hester, 1990; Wilson, 1971), at some point have attempted, in Culler's (1985) words, to "infer the posture, situation, intention, concerns, and attitudes of a speaker" (p. 38).

Milton's "Song: On May Morning"

Milton's "Song: On May Morning" is the next earliest of the four poems, composed around 1630 and first published in the 1645 *Poems*. The poem is technically a song spoken by a collective "we." I consulted 24 separate interpretations of "May Morning," most of which appeared in annotated, collected works editions. Very few of these interpretations appeared in the last 30 years.

Excepting brief commentary in editions of Milton's complete works and passing mention in articles on other poems, "Song: On May Morning" has received virtually no critical attention. The majority of work on the poem consists of literary history, source study, and comparative analysis. Because Milton did not date the "Song," scholars have argued about its date of composition, but all have agreed Milton composed it while at Cambridge, either in 1629 (Carey, 1968; Hanford, 1946; Woodhouse, 1972; Wright, 1980), 1630 (Grierson, 1925; Leishman, 1969; Shawcross, 1963), or 1631 (Parker, 1968; Tillyard, 1930). Scholars have noted that several of the poem's images are found in Shakespeare, e.g., "Day's harbinger" in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Leishman, Luxon), "green lap" in *Richard II* (Luxon), and "the yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose" in *Henry V* (Hughes, 1957; Luxon), *Cymbeline* (Leishman, Luxon, Woodhouse), and *Winter's Tale* (Carey, Luxon). Others have found images from the "Song" used again in *Paradise Lost* (Flannagan, 1998; Hughes). The theme of the "Song" is so similar to the

Latin *Elegy 5* that many scholars have treated it as a companion piece (Carey, Flannagan, Hanford, Luxon, Tillyard), with Woodhouse having gone so far as to claim that "Song" and *Elegy 5* are experiments with the same conception in different languages and forms. Finally, scholars have categorized the poem as an Elizabethan song (Hanford, Leishman, Martz, 1965; Woodhouse), or an aubade (Brooks and Hardy, 1951; Luxon), or a lyric written in the straightforward Jonsonian style (Brooks and Hardy, Hanford, Martz).

Surely the primary reason "Song: On May Morning" has not received critical attention is its youthful, derivative style. Perhaps a secondary reason for its neglect is that it embodies a type of lyric that does not fit well with the New Critical paradigm of the dramatic speaker. Culler (1985) pointed out that a theory of lyric like that of the New Critics, which treats all lyrics as utterances of individuals, "creates difficulties both for lyrics whose voice is not individualized, such as songs, and for poems in the bardic tradition whose apostrophes . . . do not belong to a recognizable attitude, a familiar tone of speech overheard" (p. 40). Not only is "Song" a song—Hanford (1946) argued that it was actually composed for music—but also its speaker employs apostrophe by addressing May as a person throughout. Ironically, the only freestanding published interpretation of "Song" was written by Cleanth Brooks (1951). His treatment of the poem is instructive. Brooks, along with J.E. Hardy, edited an edition of Milton's poetry that included critical essays on each poem, in a sense "forcing" Brooks to interpret "Song." Brooks responded to the task by (arguably) misreading the poem to make it fit the New Critical definition of lyric as dramatic utterance. He first denied that the poem is "merely" a song, then eliminated apostrophe (and set up a dramatic situation) by asserting boldly that "May is not merely 'May,' the month, but a girl in a May-day dance. She is

led in, hand in hand, by another dancer" (p. 123). Having established that the poem imitates a ritual event, Brooks could then treat the speaker as an individual responding to that event, and indeed he called the speaker "a participant in the rite of spring, not a commentator but a member of the general chorus" (pp. 123-24). Brooks did not pretend to find complexity in the speaker's attitude, but at least he managed to depict "Song" as following the axiom, laid down in *Understanding Poetry* (1938), that in poetry "one person is saying something to another person" (p. xxxiii). Furthermore, even if the poem itself lacks complexity, it is the *product* of complexity: "This little poem is simple, but it has the kind of simplicity which results from the most painstaking care in construction" (1951, p. 124).

"Song" is one of several youthful, simple, minor poems in the 1645 edition that do not repay extended critical attention. But in a critical move reminiscent of Brooks, at least two critics have managed to apply a New Critical model to all the minor poems by reifying the entire 1645 collection as an extended lyric that achieves organic unity. This maneuver is made feasible by the fact that Milton himself selected and arranged the order of the poems, thus "authoring" the *1645 Poems*. For Louis Martz (1965), Milton's selection and arrangement "ask us to view the poet's development according to the principles of poetry" (p. 4) and "create the growing awareness of a guiding, central purpose that in turn gives the volume an impressive and peculiar sense of wholeness" (p. 4). The specific theme of the *1645 Poems* is "not only the poet's own youth, but a state of mind, a point of view, ways of writing, ways of living, an old culture and outlook now shattered by the pressures of maturity and by the actions of a political man" (p. 5). Within this "poem," "Song" serves as a light-hearted preoccupation with Elizabethan song that

leads directly to *L' Allegro* and sets the stage for *Il Penseroso*, a sequence which embodies "the growth toward maturity that constitutes this volume's dominant theme" (p. 20). Gale Carrithers (1981), too, has argued that the selection and arrangement of the *1645 Poems* constitute "a fictive sequence with a thematic coherence verging on the dramatic" (p. 161), but for him, the theme of the collection is "an exploration toward theodicy" (p. 165) by "a self who by various steps and trials becomes a priestly poet" (p. 161). Carrithers has found a darker undertone in "Song" based on its placement after "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester," a poem depicting the death of a mother and child during childbirth. "Epitaph" and "Song" share an "antiphonal resemblance" (p. 168), according to Carrithers, and the "wish thee long" that ends "Song" "emphasize[s] a poignant transience" (p. 168) and "acknowledgment of limitation" (pp. 168-69). Although Martz and Carrithers differed in their interpretations of the *1645 Poems* (and subsequently in their interpretations of "Song"), both agreed that the collection achieves an organic resolution of contrasting attitudes. Thus, although "Song" and several other of Milton's early poems cannot sustain extended explication on their own, they can be treated as single movements in a larger poem.

Criticism of Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"

Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" is the second most recent of the four poems. All Hopkins' major poems were first published posthumously in the 1918 *Poems*, but the composition date of "God's Grandeur" has been fixed at 1877. "God's Grandeur" is an Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet, which consists of a rhyming octave that states the poetic problem or situation, followed by its resolution in a rhyming sestet. I consulted over 40

different interpretations of "God's Grandeur" that, similar to interpretations of "The Flea," were distributed fairly evenly over the past 70 years.

Like "The Flea," Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" has received unflagging critical attention throughout the past 70 years, although the nature of this criticism differs sharply from that of "The Flea." "God's Grandeur" depicts the utterance of a highly individualized, solitary speaker whose words belong to a recognizable attitude, but interpretations of "God's Grandeur" have rarely used the term "speaker" or "persona" at all. Instead, they have treated the poem as Hopkins' own sincere utterance, not a fictional representation of an utterance. Two reasons for this approach may have to do with Hopkins' poetic background. First, Hopkins was an ordained Jesuit priest who believed poetry to be an act of "instress," a sort of elevated perception through which the poet realizes God's distinctive design, or "inscape," in things. His poems, because they combine Christian belief with a personal, imaginative apprehension of the physical world, are difficult to imagine as "impersonal" dramatizations of speakers who are not the poet himself. Second, Hopkins' collected poems first appeared in 1918, 29 years after his death, along with a preface and notes by his friend Robert Bridges. These supporting materials became standard, which meant that Hopkins' poetry was almost always published with contextual information from a personal friend. Consequently, the New Critical attempt to decontextualize lyric by treating it as the drama of a fictional speaker never took hold among Hopkins scholars.

Criticism of "God's Grandeur" has, however, relied on a different New Critical approach: locating features of modernist poetry in all lyrics, regardless of period. This practice, which led to the devaluation of discursive lyrics, benefited Hopkins, whose

experiments in meter, diction, syntax, and figuration seemed to anticipate the nontraditional literary modes of modernism (Hopkins has often been anthologized as a 20th century poet, even though all his poems were written in the 19th century). The modernist belief that poetry should unite opposing tendencies was so strong among the New Critics that Brooks (1947) claimed "the language of poetry is the language of paradox" (p. 3), and paradox is an important device in "God's Grandeur." As an Italian sonnet, the poem opposes a problem statement in the octave with its resolution in the sextet. Also, the theme of "God's Grandeur" addresses the paradox of God's unwavering presence in a world that denies him. Not surprisingly, then, the body of criticism on "God's Grandeur" has treated the poem as an attempt to reconcile apparent oppositions.

Many critics have argued that "God's Grandeur" dramatizes the paradox of God's manifestation in a fallen world (Eagleton, 1973; Ellis, 1991; Gardner, 1966; Lackey, 2001; Kincaid, 1978; Mariani, 1970; Proffitt, 1977; Rackin, 1980; Slakey, 1969, 1996). For some, this paradox is most apparent in Hopkins' assertion that even images of human sin (e.g., the dirty, smelly, clothed human form; the barren earth; products developed from the exploitation of nature) reveal God's grandeur (Ellis, Gardner, Lackey, Rackin, Slakey, 1969). God's greatness is thus apparent, Roger Slakey wrote, "not only in the manifestations but more especially in the persistence with which he adjusts to human inadequacy" (p. 163). Other critics have argued that the poem depicts the Incarnation and therefore draws on the paradox that God sacrificed his son *because of*, not despite, humankind's failure to acknowledge him. For these critics, the sonnet's octave, which asserts humankind's failure to acknowledge God, is followed in the sextet by God's entrance into the world in the person of Jesus Christ (Ellis, Mariani, Slakey, 1996). As

Virginia Ellis put it, "God's . . . energy cohesively resists all destructive pressures, and does so not merely in spite of crushing but because of it—the principle of the Incarnation . . . is rarely absent from Hopkins' poems" (p. 128). While most critics have maintained that Hopkins resolves the paradox of God's persistence in a sinful world simply by trusting in divine grace, others have found this resolution unsatisfactory. If people are blind to God's grandeur in the first place, the argument has gone, how will they recognize his manifestation in the world? Edward Proffitt pointed out that, in the poem, "the very things that of themselves serve to reveal God . . . in the hands of man serve to conceal Him" (p. 63). Along these same lines, Terry Eagleton has argued that God's presence in nature, by residing "deep down things," is both protected from humankind's abuse and made inaccessible, so "the poem works with a dualistic image of man and Nature which permits hope precisely to the degree that it obscures the question of its realization" (p. 75). James Kincaid has disagreed with those who find evidence of the Incarnation in the poem. Kincaid asserted that Hopkins announces God's omnipresence, but Christ, who connects God with humans, "is not much there in the poem" (p. 3). The poem is thus "a celebration and a lament, an affirmation and a denial. It both closes its form triumphantly and sadly, inescapably opens that form" (pp. 3-4).

A second group of critics has argued that "God's Grandeur" dramatizes paradoxes within the Christian God himself (Boyle, 1961; Bump, 1982; Cotter, 1972; Ellis, 1991; Erb, 1984; Gardner, 1966; Rackin, 1980; Villeponteaux, 2002; White, 1966; Wright, 1951). Many have argued that the poem is essentially Trinitarian and thus draws on the paradox of a single Godhead consisting of three distinct persons (Boyle, Cotter, Erb, White, Villeponteaux). These critics have pointed out that the poem begins with an

explicit mention of God the Father and ends with an image of the Holy Spirit. The poem's middle, then, depicts the death and renewal of the Son's crucifixion and resurrection. Elizabeth Villeponteaux has provided a representative Trinitarian reading:

> The foil and the olive—representing God the Father—are shaken and crushed—signifying the Son—to produce flames and oil, emanations that reveal essence, that is, the Holy Spirit. When the olive is pressed and when the foil is shaken, the action is at once unified and tripartite . . . . [Hopkins] addresses not only the apparent contradictions of tri-unity but the character of the three persons. (pp. 204-05)

Other critics have argued that Hopkins' images of mundane objects infused with God's grandeur enact God's simultaneous immanence and transcendence (Bump, Ellis, Slakey, 1996; White, Wright). As Roger Slakey put it, the poem's dominant message is that "the incomprehensible, the ineffable, the unseeable, is within the notice of each" (p. 76). Finally, some critics have noted that, although the poem clearly asserts God's love and gentleness, Hopkins' diction (e.g., charged, flame, shook, crushed, reck, trod, seared, bent) reminds the reader of God's capacity for violent punishment (Bump, Ellis, Gardner, Rackin). Donald Rackin has argued that love in "God's Grandeur" "must be understood . . . in the Christian context of pain as well as pleasure" because it is "connected to both violence and gentleness, somewhat like the final image of God as both gentle dove and tongues of flame" (p. 71).

The motivation for Hopkins' poetry, of course, was far different from that of the modernist poets who flourished thirty years after his death and who helped usher in the New Criticism. Hopkins broke with traditional poetic forms not because he was alienated

from Western culture, but because he sought more effective ways to celebrate the God of a traditional, dogmatic Christianity. The end result, however, was a poetic style conducive to interpretive strategies developed for modernist poetry. The dominant strategy among critics of "God's Grandeur" has been to read the poem as an overlap between Hopkins' theology and his proto-modernist poetics, with paradox and irony used to express God's ineffability. Roger Slakey's (1996) view is representative: "That paradoxes spring up here is not surprising, for scriptural and liturgical expressions of God's action are rife with paradox" (p. 83).

Criticism of Eliot's "Conversation Galante"

Eliot's "Conversation Galante" is the most recent of the four poems, composed around 1909 and first published in 1917 in *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Many of the poems in this collection, most notably "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," were influenced by the French poet Jules Laforgue, whose poems often present the musings of a male speaker mistrustful of his own emotions yet unable to prevent himself from indulging his romanticisms. I consulted 21 interpretations of "Conversation Galante," most of which were published prior to 1990.

Interpretations of Eliot's "Conversation Galante," like those of "Song: On May Morning," have appeared only in complete-works commentaries or in studies that focus mainly on other poems. Eliot and Milton's poems are considered minor for similar reasons: they are brief, youthful, and highly imitative. While at Harvard Eliot discovered Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* and began experimenting with the ironic style of Jules Laforgue. The typical Laforgian speaker finds himself in a social setting, or in a romantic reverie, that he deems shallow and ridiculous; ironically, he is

too weak or cowardly to free himself. Several poems in Eliot's first collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, reveal the influence of Laforgue, and in fact "Conversation Galante" appears to be modeled after a specific Laforgue poem, "Autre Complainte de Lord Pierrot" (Gordon, 1977; Maxwell, 1952; Pinion, 1986; Rees, 1974; Schuchard, 1999; Shanahan, 1953; Thompson, 1963; Unger, 1966). Unlike "Song: On May Morning," however, "Conversation Galante" embodies a type of lyric conducive to New Critical explication: it depicts a private, highly individualized duologue between potential lovers and relies on ironic implication. The reasons for its neglect, then, may include poor execution on Eliot's part; the critical consensus seems to be that Eliot fails to control Laforgian irony with the same deftness as he does in later poems, especially "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," composed approximately two years later.

Perhaps the primary failing of "Conversation Galante" is that Eliot's difficult style, with its obscure allusions, lack of connecting phrases, and layers of irony, in this case results in mere obscurity, as opposed to the ambiguity valued by many New Critics (and embodied in a poem like "The Flea"). Critics have agreed that the poem begins with a male speaker's digression from a conversation (probably a flirtation) with a female interlocutor, but the tone and intention of the speaker's opening lines are fuzzy. They may represent a poetic flight of fancy (Pinkney, 1984), or a serious attempt to move from shallow banter to deep conversation (Shanahan, 1953), or a parody of romantic thought and feeling (Pinion, 1986; Thompson, 1963). Some critics have speculated that the woman's response, "How you digress!," indicates her obtuseness (Pinion; Rees, 1974; Shanahan; White, 1999), while others have found her to be a "formidable female companion" (Pinkney, p. 29) who is simply "bored and annoyed" (Schuchard, 1999, p.

78) with the speaker's self-absorbed speechmaking. In the second stanza, the speaker turns his attention to piano music playing in the background. He may be criticizing the music as an example of our attempts to elevate banal romantic yearnings (Pinion; Rees; Schuchard; Thompson; Unger, 1966), or he may be genuinely praising it as an attempt to express the inexpressible (Geary, 1986, p. 24). The woman appears to take offense at the end of the second stanza, so in the third stanza the speaker adopts a (false?) tone of self-deprecation and pays (backhanded?) compliments to the woman. The last line of the poem appears to be spoken by the woman (though Rees assumed it belongs to the man) and may further illustrate her obtuseness, or it may mock the speaker in the manner of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Interpreted in this way, the speaker despises the superficiality of the social situation, but is too weak to avoid it or disregard his standing in it (Schuchard; Shanahan; Sigg, 1989; Thompson).

"Conversation Galante" and "Song: On May Morning" share many of the qualities of minor poetry. If Milton's poem is too simplistic to generate critical attention, perhaps Eliot's is too inscrutable. Forgotten sometimes is the importance to New Critics of poems' "plain sense," I.A. Richards' (1929) phrase for poems' "plain, overt meaning, as a set of ordinary, intelligible, English sentences" (p. 13). Deciphering this meaning was the first problem of criticism, according to Richards. Even Brooks' (1947) "The Heresy of Paraphrase," oft cited as a New Critical manifesto *against* reducing poems to their plain sense, acknowledged that "we can very properly use paraphrases as pointers and as short-hand references provided that we know what we are doing" (pp. 196-97). One of the New Critics' most effective strategies for demonstrating the difference between poetic and ordinary language, in fact, was to paraphrase a poem in order to

throw into relief its poetic form. In short, New Critical explications often rely on the ability to determine the most literal meaning of poems, and that is precisely what critics of "Conversation Galante" have been unable to do.

Lyric as Script for the Dramatic Reader

Yet to appear in the criticism of these four poems is a new approach to reading lyrics in which readers themselves assume the role of the dramatic speaker (Altieri, 1990, 1998, 2001; MacPhail, 2002; Thurston, 2000; Vendler, 1995). Advocates of this approach argue that it is more socially responsive, but also "portable" and not overburdened by the need to contextualize poems. Helen Vendler has argued that the lyric reader should be "no longer a reader but rather an utterer, saying the words of the poem *in propria persona*, internally and with proprietary feeling" (p. xi). This approach can achieve the same universality as New Critical methods because it, too, treats all lyrics the same, regardless of their original context. They are scripts for the reader, and all should be approached, according to Charles Altieri (2001), by "deciding what kind of imaginative space one has to occupy in order to appreciate the qualities provided by these words in this order" (p. 261). Unlike the New Critical approach to the dramatic speaker, however, this newer approach is inherently social. Michael Thurston has written that "as the reader speaks the poem's script, she takes up and tests against her own experience the solution in language one consciousness has constructed amidst the array of social forces," (p. 83) and such identification helps develop "intersubjective competencies" (p. 84). The experience of reading lyric, in fact, can produce a more potent form of ethical criticism than is provided by prose fiction. Ethical criticism typically favors novels because their detailed, concrete descriptions can elicit empathy for characters who are different from

us. A certain distance remains, however, because these fictional characters remain others. But when we take on the first-person script of lyric, "we are not watching characters on a screen or a stage; we are actually becoming the voices through which they live" (Altieri, 2001, p. 262).

These defenders of lyric have proposed an attractive alternative to New Critical approaches, but noticeably absent from their descriptions of lyric *reading* are any suggestions for how to *write* about lyric. This is a glaring omission, considering that students and scholars will always be expected to produce written arguments that grow out of their reading experiences. To be sure, those who advocate the reader-as-speaker approach have included explications as part of their arguments. These seem like New Critical explications differently framed, however, with the major difference limited to Altieri's (2001) command that "New Critical talk about the speaker must become talk about the speaking" (p. 262). In this regard the reader-as-speaker approach is reminiscent of Stanley Fish's (1970) "affective stylistics" from a generation ago. Fish hoped to transfer attention from the text to the reader by treating the text as "no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an *event*, something that *happens* to, and with the participation of, the reader" (p. 125). What Fish came to realize, however, is that he had to objectify the reading event in order to make knowledge claims about it. And once he filtered out the idiosyncrasies of his own reading event, "the integrity of the text was as basic to [his] position as it was to the position of the New Critics" (1980, p. 7). Clearly this is not what theorists like Altieri have in mind. Upon criticizing the New Critics for the specious claim that poems convey non-discursive truths, Altieri claims that his own approach brings out lyric's capacity to explore "values that are opposed to the entire psychological

apparatus set in place by Enlightenment idealizations about knowledge and judgment in accord with stateable criteria" (p. 260). Such explorations may occur during the reading/speaking of lyrics, but they do not carry over into writing, as evidenced by Altieri's own claims-and-evidence explications. Whatever the value of reading lyrics as if the words are one's own, so far this approach promises only superficial changes to written interpretations.

Conclusion

The collected criticism on "Song: On May Morning," "The Flea," "God's Grandeur," and "Conversation Galante" demonstrates both the persistence of New Critical practices and the limitations of generalizing about these practices. Even now, after the device of the dramatic speaker has been dismissed as ahistorical and possibly repressive, critics still use it to discuss what happens in these diverse lyrics. This does not mean that practical criticism of these poems has ignored changes in the field of literary studies. Criticism of "The Flea" has always combined history and biography with talk of the dramatic speaker, and recently a major focus of Donne criticism, his representations of gender, has been interwoven with discussions of the dramatic elements of the poem. On the other hand, for a lyric like "God's Grandeur," whose original context makes the notion of a fictive speaker seem implausible, critics have *never* used the dramatic speaker, even during the height of the New Criticism. But critics have used, and continue to use, assumptions of organic wholeness when discussing "God's Grandeur." The notion of a closed text has fallen out of favor in literary theory, but critics continue to treat Hopkins' sonnet as a meticulously structured whole. On the other hand, the organic unity of "Song: On May Morning," "Conversation Galante," and "The Flea" has never been a

topic of great concern for critics. The latter two poems are too minor and flawed to have received much attention of *any* sort.

The analysis presented in this chapter illustrates two points that literary scholars recognize, but that sometimes get obscured: (1) descriptions of critical "movements" erase important details of specific scholarly exchanges, and (2) participants in a scholarly conversation do not always share theoretical orientations. For all the problems a literary canon entails, it also provides a common ground on which scholars of all sorts can meet. Those who speak to this gathering must use conventions that already have authority for their audience, and, consequently, those conventions may persist over many generations.

CHAPTER TWO:

Method

Overview of the Study

This study consisted of two phases. In the first phase, English department faculty filled out a poetry familiarity survey that asked them to rate 20 poems according to their familiarity with them and the proximity of the poems to their scholarly writing. As part of the survey, individuals were asked for their permission to be contacted for the second phase of the study, in which they would read poems aloud and voice their thoughts. Based on the survey results, I selected four poems to be used in the think-aloud study and recruited 9 participants. One participant was recruited to pilot test the think-aloud procedure, while the other 8 were selected because the poems met the following four conditions for them: (1) familiar and close to their scholarly writing; (2) familiar/far; (3) unfamiliar/close; (4) unfamiliar/far. All 9 participants completed a think-aloud session in which they read the four poems and planned an MLA conference talk about them. The

think-aloud sessions were audio taped; these tapes were transcribed; and the transcripts were coded and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Poetry Familiarity Survey

Selection of Poems

In order to identify poems related to the scholarly writing of multiple participants, I generated 10 broad categories of specialization in which the short poem is an important genre: Chaucer, Late 16th/Early 17th Century British, Donne, Milton, British Romantic Period, American Romantic Period, Hopkins, Yeats, Modernism, Late 20th Century. For each category, I selected one canonical poem and one non-canonical poem so that the poems might meet conditions of familiarity and unfamiliarity. A poem was considered canonical if it was collected in the *Norton*, *Oxford*, and *Longman* anthologies. Non-canonical poems needed to be recognizable so that participants could judge the poems' proximity to their professional writing. Consequently, the non-canonical poems selected were written by canonical poets.

Because the process of reading and thinking aloud is fatiguing (Charney, 1993, p. 208), and because the study design required that participants read and write about four poems, I selected poems that were no longer than 30 lines.

To keep the questionnaire brief and thus increase response rates (MacNealy, 1999, p. 158), I limited the categories of specialization to 10, and the number of poems in each category to two. The 20 poems and their canonical status appears in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Category, Canonical Status, and Title of Poems in the Survey.

Category	**Canonical Poem**	**Non-Canonical Poem**
Chaucer	"Gentilesse"	"To His Scribe Adam"
Late 16th/Early 17th British	William Shakespeare, Sonnet *116*	Henry King, "Sonnet: The Double Rock"
Donne	"The Flea"	"Break of Day"
Milton	"On Shakespeare"	"Song: On May Morning"
British Romantic Period	William Blake, "London"	William Wordsworth, "There is an Eminence"
American Romantic Period	Emily Dickinson, "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—"	Edgar Allan Poe, "A Dream within a Dream"
Hopkins	"God's Grandeur"	"In the Valley of the Elwy"
Yeats	"The Second Coming"	"On a Political Prisoner"
Modernism	William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow"	T.S. Eliot, "Conversation Galante"
Late 20th	Seamus Heaney, "Punishment"	Rita Dove, "The House Slave"

Design

A copy of the survey appears as Appendix A. Participants could not be promised anonymity because I needed to contact them for the follow-up think aloud study. To ensure that identifying themselves would not discourage participants from admitting unfamiliarity with poems, survey instructions made clear that participants were not expected to recognize all the poems. Pilot testing indicated that this message was emphasized sufficiently.

As seen in Appendix A, survey questions listed the title of the poem and its author, and the questions were presented in random order. Survey questions were closed-ended to facilitate quick and easy completion, and pilot testing with 10 English graduate students indicated a completion time of 5 to 10 minutes. Answers were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale so that, for each poem, participants could express a range of familiarity and proximity to their scholarly writing.

Participants

100 English department faculty from two universities were recruited to participate in a two-phase study. Participants were limited to knowledge-makers in the field of literary studies, faculty who publish regularly in scholarly venues and who train graduate students in doctoral programs. I compiled a list of 100 faculty members in English at two universities classified as "Doctoral/Research Universities—Extensive" (formerly "Research I"), according to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Non-probability, purposeful sampling techniques were used to ensure that all recipients worked with poetry in some capacity. I consulted departmental websites and selected faculty members only if they had published on poetry or if their departmental webpage listed poetry as a scholarly interest.

Procedure

Paper surveys were mailed to participants, a method of delivery that has the disadvantage of not allowing the researcher to control how the survey is completed (MacNealy, 1999, p. 149). In order to ensure the reliability of the survey and the think-aloud study, survey instructions urged participants not to look up poems that were unfamiliar to them. Pilot testing indicated that these instructions were sufficiently clear.

Two weeks after sending the surveys I had received 31 responses. At that point I sent a follow-up email to the remaining recipients, and after 2 more weeks I received four additional responses. The 35% response rate is in line with the usual return rate of paper questionnaires, according to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992).

Results

Table 2.2 indicates the mean familiarity rating and standard deviation for all 20 poems. These results support the classification into canonical and non-canonical; all but one non-canonical received a mean score under 3.0 on a 7-point scale, and all but two canonical poems received ratings above 4.0. For each category of specialization, the rating for the canonical poem was higher, though in some categories (e.g., Chaucer, Late 20th) this difference was minimal.

Table 2.2
Mean Familiarity Rating for Canonical and Non-Canonical Poems.

Canonical Poem	**Mean Familiarity**	**Standard Deviation**	**Non-Canonical Poem**	**Mean Familiarity**	**Standard Deviation**
Shakespeare, Sonnet *116*	6.74	.66	Donne, "Break of Day"	3.80	2.06
Yeats, "The Second Coming"	6.46	1.17	Wordsworth, "There is an Eminence"	2.94	1.91
Dickinson, "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—"	5.97	1.49	Milton, "Song: On May Morning"	2.71	1.99
Blake, "London"	5.80	1.41	Chaucer, "To His Scribe Adam"	2.57	2.06
Donne, "The Flea"	5.69	1.47	Yeats, "On a Political Prisoner"	2.57	2.08
Hopkins, "God's Grandeur"	5.49	2.08	Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy"	2.49	2.16
Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow"	5.43	2.15	Poe, "A Dream within a Dream"	2.49	2.13
Milton, "On Shakespeare"	4.46	1.80	Eliot, "Conversation Galante"	2.06	1.78
Chaucer, "Gentilesse"	2.83	2.23	Dove, "The House Slave"	1.54	1.42
Heaney, "Punishment"	1.86	1.77	King, "Sonnet: The Double Rock"	1.20	1.02

Think-Aloud Study

Participants

Twenty-eight of the 35 survey respondents consented to be contacted for participation in the think-aloud study. For each of those 28 participants, a 2x2 table was constructed to categorize their ratings of the 20 poems as either familiar to them/close to their scholarly writing; familiar/far; unfamiliar/close; or unfamiliar/far. Because the poems were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, the cut-off for each category was 3.5. Table 2.3 is an example of a 2x2 table, constructed for think-aloud participant "Reggie."

Table 2.3
Reggie's Familiarity/Distance 2x2 Table.

Reggie	**Familiar >3.5**	**Familiar <3.5**
Close to work >3.5	Donne, "Flea" Blake Milton, "Shakespeare" Shakespeare Dickinson Wordsworth	Donne, "Day" Milton, "May"
Close to work <3.5	Williams Yeats, "Second" Hopkins, "God's"	Chaucer, "Adam" Dove Eliot Poe Hopkins, "Valley" Chaucer, "Gentilesse" King Yeats, "Prisoner" Heaney

Participants least often rated a poem unfamiliar/close to their scholarly writing. The two poems that received this rating most often (six times) were Milton's "Song: On May Morning" (Appendix B) and Eliot's "Conversation Galante" (Appendix C). Of the 12 participants who rated at least one of these poems "unfamiliar/close," 9 also rated the other one "unfamiliar/far." In other words, 5 participants rated "May Morning" unfamiliar/close and "Conversation Galante" unfamiliar/far. Four others reversed this order, rating "Conversation Galante" unfamiliar/close and "May Morning" unfamiliar/far. The first group was labeled "British Renaissance," and the second group was labeled "Late Victorian/Early Modernism."

Of the 5 members of the Renaissance group, 4 rated Donne's "The Flea" (Appendix D) familiar/close and Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" (Appendix E) far/familiar. All 4 members of the Victorian/Modernism group reversed this order, rating "The Flea" familiar/far and "God's Grandeur" familiar/close. These 8 participants (divided into 2

groups of 4) allowed for a crossed design, in which all 8 would read a poem in each of the 4 conditions, so these 8 were recruited to participate in the think-aloud study.

Below are the groupings and brief profiles of each participant (they have been assigned fictional names to preserve their anonymity). Please note that "Jen" did not fall into either the Renaissance or Late Victorian/Early Modernism group based on her response to the poetry familiarity survey. She had agreed to participate in the think-aloud study, however, so she was recruited for a pilot session. She completed the task without complications, so her transcript was included in the data set for those analyses that did not depend on comparisons between the two groups.

Pilot Session

Jen: a female Professor who writes on Irish literature.

Renaissance

Stan: a male Professor who writes on Donne, Milton, and Crashaw.

Tony: a male Professor who writes on Italian and British Renaissance rhetoric.

Reggie: a male Professor who writes on 18th century British popular culture.

Nancy: a female Associate Professor who writes on women and gender in the Renaissance.

Late Victorian/Early Modernism

Gayl: a female Professor who writes on women and gender in the Victorian period.

Albert: a male Professor who writes on 20th century American popular culture.

Eric: a male Professor who writes on Joyce.

David: a male Assistant Professor who writes on lesbian and gay studies and queer theory.

Materials and Design

As indicated in the previous section, the four poems were selected based on the combination that would meet all four conditions for the highest number of participants. The poems and the conditions they met for both groups appear in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4
Poems and the Conditions They Met for Each Group.

	Renaissance Group	**Late Victorian/ Early Modernism Group**
Familiar and Close to professional writing	Donne's "The Flea"	Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"
Unfamiliar and close to professional writing	Milton's "Song: On May Morning"	Eliot's "Conversation Galante"
Familiar and far from professional writing	Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"	Donne's "The Flea"
Unfamiliar and far from professional writing	Eliot's "Conversation Galante"	Milton's "Song: On May Morning"

Procedure

Think-aloud sessions took place in participants' offices with phones and computers turned off and a "do not disturb" sign on the door. Participants were asked to read and sign the IRB-approved consent form. They were then shown an excerpt from one of Peskin's (1998) transcribed protocols to familiarize them with the product of a think-aloud study, and also to reassure them that their talk could be fragmented and uncensored. Participants were then given a pen and paper, the task instructions (see Appendix F), and the four poems, presented individually on a sheet of paper in counterbalanced order to neutralize any order effects. Because the validity of think-aloud data may be compromised by attempts to make verbal reports coherent or attempts to explain processing (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), participants were instructed repeatedly to report *everything* that went through their minds without

explanation or censoring. People sometimes forget to think aloud (Ericsson & Simon; Pressley & Afflerbach), so participants were informed that I would remind them to talk if they fell silent for 30 seconds. Although adults do not require extensive training in thinking aloud (Ericsson & Simon; Pressley & Afflerbach), typically participants are given practice exercises, so participants first solved two multiplication problems while thinking aloud. In order to make the reading-to-write task as authentic as possible, the think-aloud prompt (Appendix B) was modeled on calls for papers that appear under the Special Sessions heading of the *MLA Newsletter*. Once participants confirmed that they felt comfortable thinking aloud and understood the task, I began audio taping their session. They were given 1 hour or until they became fatigued to work on the task, and on average they worked between 45 minutes and an hour. After the think-aloud sessions, brief open-ended interviews were conducted. Participants were asked (1) to describe the experience of thinking aloud; (2) to describe their typical process for writing an article or conference talk; (3) how the scholarly literature factors into their process of writing an article or conference talk. The audio tapes were transcribed by me.

Data Analysis

In order to parse the transcripts or "protocols" at a basic level, I applied a primary coding scheme consisting of six categories for reading behavior that were developed both deductively and inductively. Four categories (rereading, comprehension, evaluation, metacomment) were drawn from Charney (1993) and reflect reading processes. The remaining two categories (interpretation, argument) were developed by me from an initial examination of the protocols and reflect reading-to-write processes. One might define

literary argument as "defended interpretation," so differences between interpretation and argument comments were largely contextual. In general, comments were coded as interpretation if participants uttered them in the context of first working out the purport and significance of the poems. Comments were coded as argument if participants uttered them in the context of planning their MLA talks. Figure 2.1 provides definitions and examples.

Figure 2.1
Coding Scheme.

Reading Processes

- **Rereading:** A verbatim repetition of text already read.
- **Comprehension:** Problem-solving episode to figure out the literal meaning of the text.
    - "nocturne is a night song, right? I think so"
- **Evaluation:** An explicit evaluation of the text.
    - "not really one of Milton's best"
- **Metacomment:** Comment on the reader's habitual behavior or current reading strategy.
    - "I'm going to read these in chronological order"

Reading-to-Write Processes

- **Interpretation:** Included comments that:
    - clarified ambiguous, difficult, or figurative passages.

    - "moon imagery suggesting sentimentality"
    - "the 'morning star,' of course, is Venus"

- described the text's literary features.
    - "we're kind of in the landscape of synesthesia"
    - "alliteration in 'grandeur of God'"

- analyzed the text's artistic effects.
    - "repetition of 'trod' makes us trod as we read it"
    - "word inversion, forcing closer reading"

- unpacked greater significance buried in the text.
    - "ultimately the poem itself is a manifestation of God's grandeur"
    - "incipient themes that get picked up again in *Paradise Lost*"

- **Argument:** Comment related to planning or composing in response to the prompt.
    - "my argument can't really account for that line"
    - "for my abstract I'll frame a conversation between these two poems"

After the protocols were categorized using the primary coding scheme, I analyzed the reading-to-write comments (interpretation and argument) using a secondary coding scheme (Figure 2.2) drawn from Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and Wilder's (2005) descriptions of the special topoi of literary studies. Only interpretation and argument comments were analyzed because they represent the processes that lead directly to written literary arguments. Five categories (*appearance/reality*, *paradigm*, *paradox*, *ubiquity*, *contemptus mundi*) were drawn from the special topoi identified by Fahnestock and Secor. Three more categories (*mistaken critic*, *context*, *social justice*) were drawn from Wilder's additions to the special topoi. I chose this analytic procedure for two reasons. First, although Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder use the special topoi as a means of audience analysis, classical rhetoricians used topoi as inventional tools, so they seem appropriate for analyzing the processes by which scholars develop professional arguments. Second, Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder analyzed a larger sample of articles

than other researchers who have studied scholarly articles in literary studies, and together they present the most complete diachronic view of literary argument available. Their robust descriptions offer the best opportunity to connect analyses of written argument with reading-to-write processes. Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder's special topoi are not mutually exclusive categories. For example, a critic might bring in contextual information to challenge standard, apparent meanings. Or the paradigm of feminist interpretation might be applied to advocate social change. Because of this fluidity among the special topoi, I double- and even triple-coded comments when appropriate.

Figure 2.2
Topoi Coding Scheme.

- **Appearance/reality:** Assertion of a deeper, "real" meaning beneath the surface of an "apparent" meaning.
    - "there's a buried sexual theme here just rising to the surface"

- **Mistaken critic (subvariant of appearance/reality):** Assertion that the critic's own interpretation is "really" valid, as opposed to the "apparent" validity of previous interpretations.
    - "that line, I think, was quoted against Eliot at various points as his saying that women are the eternal enemy of the absolute. Seems a little unfair"

- **Paradigm:** Placement of a conceptual template over the details of the text in order to produce a reading.
    - "I might give a feminist reading of the Donne and Eliot"

- **Context (subvariant of paradigm):** Placement of a historical or cultural context template over the details of the text.
    - "that's about it for a first reading of these. Now I'll start beginning to look at them in ways that connect them with history"

- **Paradox:** Discovery of apparently irreconcilable opposites in the text.
    - "the speaker is here both more transparent and perhaps also more obscure"

- **Social justice:** Comment that connects life and literature by advocating social justice and social change.
    - "this would be a great poem for the Bush administration to use to justify the destruction of nature everywhere"

- **Ubiquity.** Assertion that a textual entity, at first concealed, is in fact everywhere in the text.
    - "I'm just kind of running through and finding 'spring' everywhere now that I'm thinking along that line"

- ***Contemptus mundi:*** Comment on the despair of modern society.
    - "there's a historical progression toward an absence of authority in which the speaker is always undercut"

CHAPTER THREE:

Scholarship in the Reader: Nine English Professors Processing Four Poems

At the end of Chapter 1, I argued that recent calls for readers to assume the role of lyric speaker had not yet influenced published criticism of Donne's "The Flea," Milton's "Song: On May Morning," Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," or Eliot's "Conversation Galante." The absence of the reader-as-speaker approach in written interpretation may not surprise even its advocates, for it has been described as an *alternative* to interpretation. For example, Paul Fry (1995) argued that giving ourselves over to poetry releases us from the Enlightenment compulsion to interpret and "temporarily releases consciousness from its dependence on the signifying process" (p. 4). Along these same lines, Charles Altieri (2001) asserted that lyric experience, because it relies on "feelings performed and extended rather than with truths realized and tested" (p. 279), means "one

need not talk of finding grounds of any kinds or of having either truth or undetermination" (p. 279). Michael Thurston (2000) provided perhaps the clearest statement of why assuming the role of speaker precludes criticism. Thurston described the experience of reading lyric as follows: "I grant the poem a degree of control over my body . . . . I share the poem's mode of response to, its way of living through, the question or problem the poem treats" (p. 85). It would be difficult (impossible?) to analyze a poem as one is "living through" it, and to abstract from this experience later would distort it. It may be that the reader-as-speaker approach is a productive way to process lyrics, but will never show up in published criticism.

One place the reader-as-speaker approach might show up is in think-aloud studies, which can reveal text-processing strategies as they occur and has been used to test reader-response theories in the past. Eugene Kintgen (1983) and Joan Peskin (1998) tested Jonathan Culler's (1975) poetry reading conventions in think-aloud studies of high school students and English graduate students. Culler argued that over time readers internalize conventions that they activate automatically upon recognizing a text as poetry. The "rule of significance" means that readers expect poems to express "a significant attitude to some problem concerning man and/or his relation to the universe" (p. 115). Also readers activate "conventions of metaphorical coherence" by producing "coherence on the levels of both tenor and vehicle" (p. 115). Finally, readers apply the "convention of thematic unity" (p. 115) by integrating the elements of the poem into a unified whole. Kintgen and Peskin's participants applied Culler's reading conventions with varying degrees of success, depending on their experience with poetry, but all *expected* the poems to conform to these conventions and tried to make them do so. Elise Earthman (1992) tested

aspects of Wolfgang Iser (1978) and Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) reading theories in a think-aloud study of high school students and English graduate students. Iser argued that, in a literary text, "it is the gaps, the fundamental asymmetry between text and reader, that give rise to communication in the reading process" (p. 167). Earthman found that graduate students were more creative "gap-fillers" than high school students, but both groups attempted to fill gaps imaginatively. Earthman's results also support Rosenblatt's claim that readers "very greatly in the extent to which they hold fast to a central structure of ideas and attitudes while sensing a penumbra of overtones and associations" (p. 60). Graduate students were much more likely than high school students to pursue "overtones and associations" that were not central to poems' plain sense meanings.

This chapter follows Earthman (1992), Kintgen (1983), and Peskin (1998) in using think-aloud methodology to test theories of poetry response. The first "theory" to be tested is simply the scholarly interpretations of "The Flea," "Song: On May Morning, "God's Grandeur," and "Conversation Galante," as abstracted in Chapter 1. When literary scholars first process lyrics, do they apply interpretive frameworks similar to those used in published criticism, or is there a wide gap between initial processing and written interpretation? The second theory is the reader-as-speaker approach described above and at the end of Chapter 1. Do literary scholars assume the role of speaker as a way of processing lyrics, or is this approach not yet part of their interpretive repertoire?

What follows is a qualitative analysis of participants' verbal protocols. I was interested in participants' initial processing of the poems, so I analyzed the transcripts inductively and did not apply a coding scheme. Space restrictions prevent me from discussing every participant's response to every poem, so I have confined my attention to

those readers whose responses were both representative and complex. In excerpts from the think aloud protocols, the reader's comments are represented in ordinary typeface, while the text from the poem being read is represented in italics.

Donne's "The Flea"

"The Flea" was rated "familiar" by 30 of 35 survey respondents, including all 9 who went on to participate in the think-aloud study. Of the four poems, "The Flea" generated the second least amount of interpretive commentary (an average of 641 words) by think-aloud participants, although output was 54% higher than for "Song: On May Morning." Evaluative comments were few (about 1%) and generally expressed more respect than affection for the poem. The summation of one participant represented a common sentiment: "It is amazing, but it isn't a poem that I feel much affinity with." One participant excluded "The Flea" from her MLA abstract because it did not fit her argument, and another excluded it out of dislike for the poem.

Participants reacted strongly to Donne's treatment of the female addressee in "The Flea," and the nature of their responses depended largely on their interpretation of the speaker's tone: is his argument a true attempt at seduction or simply a lighthearted display of wit? Gayl, for instance, took the seduction attempt at its face and produced the most negative response of any participant. She had never worked on Donne in a scholarly context ("Donne I'm familiar with but don't spend time with . . . this is not a poem I've readily reviewed"), which may have made her less inclined to read "The Flea" ironically or distinguish it from other Renaissance seduction poems:

> **Gayl:** I'm not taken by its effort. Maybe that's a feminine stance, maybe I just don't particularly pick up on or get intrigued by yet another instance of what seems to be a seduction.

Gayl excluded "The Flea" from her MLA abstract not because she read the poem as anti-feminist, but rather because it seemed irrelevant to her topic of speakers' relationships with nature ("I don't see nature here"). But her interpretation of the female addressee as little more than a sexual conquest was foremost in her mind as she thought about the poem in a teaching context:

> **Gayl:** I guess I'm really down on some of these Renaissance guys and their . . . . I mean I just keep thinking about how, in teaching a poem like this—I can't help it, I'm a teacher—I'd have to work with the sexual tension, but I wouldn't want to beat it to death, and I wouldn't want to be doing it in a co-ed class where I'm upsetting some of my younger female students.

The speaker's argument in "The Flea" is so outlandish ("go to bed with me because this flea has bitten us both") that most participants interpreted his tone as farcical. Tony began with a straightforward reading of the situation:

> **Tony:** Definitely a case of our overhearing a speaker talking to a silent but not unresponsive young woman. I'll think heterosexual about this, think in heterosexual terms. He's remonstrating with her, attempting to get her "to go the distance," as they say.

But he immediately noted the absurdity of the argument ("The logic, the argument doesn't make much sense"), which led him to conclude that the speaker's words represent little more than an exercise in wit:

> **Tony:** I'm not sure what's at stake in her actions, to kill or not to kill the flea, except that it preserves their—it preserves his opportunity to talk. . . . It's sort of interesting that much of it is about the speaker and the speaker's clever use of words, about his wittiness, more than about whether or not he's successful.

Of course deciding that the speaker is more interested in talking than lovemaking does not preclude the possibility that the poem is antifeminist. In his MLA abstract Tony addressed the relative agency of the lyric addressees, and he concluded that, because Donne's speaker is preoccupied with his own wit at the expense of his female listener, the woman's presence is superfluous:

> **Tony:** There doesn't have to be a flea or a woman involved at all. Attempting to argue her into submission, Donne's speaker is at each point more assertive rather than less. His behavior would be kind of imperious in a way. . . .The code is male and the female other.

Perhaps the most complex interpretation was produced by Albert, who was unable to settle on a single reading of the female addressee. Like Tony, he did not believe the speaker's argument for seduction to be serious:

> **Albert:** One of the most ingenious and, of course, obviously fallacious arguments for seduction ever come up with. . . . It's kind of the poet, I

> think, playing with the idea of seeing, "How far can I go with this? Let me take this image and see just how absurd I can be and keep it to something that sounds like formal logic, you know, syllogistic, an irrefutable argument."

"The Flea" is a dramatic lyric in which the female addressee never actually speaks, but this does not mean she is unresponsive. In fact, implied action takes place between stanzas, and this prompted Albert to afford the addressee a rather powerful role as the arbiter of the speaker's display of wit:

> **Albert:** You might say he's trying probably not to physically seduce the woman so much as intellectually seduce her. If she likes the poem, if she likes the argument, that's the real seduction.

Albert then brought this interpretation full circle by considering the possibility that the intellectual seduction is, in fact, the physical seduction:

> **Albert:** Nor does he think she'll buy that argument. So the point seems here to be less to literally persuade her than to amuse her. Perhaps then that would be a way of literally persuading her, maybe he would get her to laugh her way to bed. It could work with some, not with others.

As demonstrated by Tony's think-aloud protocol, the complexity of Donne's speakers makes it difficult to predict how a given scholar will judge the poet's attitude toward women. At first Albert seemed to lean toward an indictment of the poem as antifeminist, since the female listener is never allowed actual words:

> **Albert:** The woman does try to refute [the argument] in a very direct way. She kills the source of it, but then he turns that to his argument, too. Of course as a number of feminist critics have pointed out, she doesn't get to answer back, really, except in his construction of it, her killing the flea, so maybe she would have a better argument back . . . more than the speaker's summary of her argument.

Not completely satisfied with this reading, however, Albert later hypothesized another layer of subtlety, one in which Donne completely undercuts the authority of his speaker:

> **Albert:** Is the Donne here playing with the idea and maybe deconstructing the male speaker in his very clever, but obviously very contrived and fallacious, logical argument?

Albert soon cast doubt on this theory ("It's hard to see it that way, though"), too, and he failed to provide a final judgment prior to the end of his think-aloud session.

Perhaps the most pro-feminist interpretation of "The Flea" was produced by Jen, who felt so confident in her prior knowledge of the poem ("'The Flea' I know quite well") that she was thinking about her argument even before reading the poem aloud. Her first thought was to address gender, and she appeared to be leaning toward an unfavorable assessment of Donne:

> **Jen:** What am I going to say about the lyric? Am I just going to be exploring the lyric? No, I'm thinking about gender; I'm thinking about that whole *carpe diem* tradition, I'm thinking about the whole

> coerciveness of that tradition, that he's going to beat her down, he's going to prevent her triumphing.

To an extent feminist critiques of Donne's love poetry are critiques of the genre of the dramatic lyric, which by definition involves a speaker addressing a silent auditor. Because there is action between stanzas in "The Flea," however, the poem can be read as dialogic. As Jen reviewed the poem, she not only acknowledged the female listener's responses, she literally gave voice to them:

> **Jen:** Between stanza one and stanza two she says, "This is nonsense; I'm going to kill the flea." [Later] And then in the white space between stanza two and stanza three she obviously says, "well screw you, I'm going to kill the flea anyway," as I would too.

In the end, because the speaker changes the direction of his argument based on the addressee's responses between stanzas, Jen applauded the way Donne incorporates the woman's point of view:

> **Jen:** Actually the reason I do like the poem—though it's extremely gross—is the idea of motion between the stanzas. . . . because each time he directly addresses her.

Discussion

All participants read "The Flea" as drama, meaning they attributed its words to the "speaker," or "persona," or "male character," etc. The poem's gender dynamics garnered the most attention, which is not surprising considering the poetic situation of a male speaker attempting to seduce a silent, female addressee. Participants voiced nearly

all the major positions in the critical debate surrounding gender roles in "The Flea," and in some cases they entertained contradictory interpretations within the course of their own protocols. Gayl expressed the minority view that "The Flea" depicts an actual seduction, while Tony ascribed to the more common opinion that the poem depicts simply a battle of wits. Both of their readings, however, coincide with the interpretations of such critics as Crofts (1962), Crutwell (1971), Docherty (1986), Mueller (1994), and Spacks (1968) in perceiving the male speaker's domination of his silent listener. According to this view, regardless of how seriously one takes the seductions depicted in Donne's love poems, they "inscribe at key points the prevailing asymmetry of outlook and sexual role that casts the male as the persuader and possessor, the female as the persuaded and the possessed" (Mueller, p. 42). Jen initially dismissed "The Flea" as a typical seduction poem, with all the gender inequities that genre implies. Ultimately, however, she came to appreciate the way Donne manipulates the monologic conventions of lyric in order to give the female addressee a voice. This interpretation echoes those of Bell (1983), Cathcart (1975), Larocco (1995), Raynie (2001), Roussel (1986), and Scarry (1988), and Smith (1972), and expresses the view that, in his love poetry, "Donne is never able to disregard the woman's point of view. The lady continues to disturb and check and alter the speaker's assumptions" (Bell, p. 117). Meanwhile, Albert's inability to decide on a single interpretation illustrates the strength of diametrically opposed interpretations and supports Theresa DiPasquale's (1995) assertion that "as critics of the poem, we can insist on no one reading" (p. 90).

No participant approached "The Flea" as a script for his or her own performance. Since the poem is clearly a dramatic representation of a male character's badinage, this

may have made participants less inclined to speak the poem's words as their own. Altieri (2001) does include dramatic monologues in his theory of lyric, arguing that, if we assume the role of speaker, we can "hear character (and not just interpret it)" by making "speaking voices come alive, like the sneer of the duke in 'My Last Duchess' or the whine in 'Andrea del Sarto'" (p. 262). In contrast, Vendler (1995) excludes from her reader-as-speaker approach any lyrics that clearly involve character and thus seem overheard. Participants' behavior supports Vendler's more limited approach, as all treated "The Flea" as a character's speech they were overhearing.

Milton's "Song: On May Morning"

"Song: On May Morning" was rated "less than familiar" by 28 of the 35 faculty members who responded to my poetry familiarity survey, including all 9 who went on to participate in the think-aloud study. Participants generated less interpretive commentary (an average of 416 words) on "May Morning" than any of the other three poems by far; on the other hand, "May Morning" drew more evaluative comments—mostly negative—than the other three poems combined. Simply put, participants found "May Morning" to be, in the words of one, "quite a bad, boring poem." For this reason, 2 participants excluded the poem from their MLA abstracts.

Stan, a member of the Renaissance group, expressed confidence in his knowledge of Milton ("I know Milton generally pretty well") while admitting unfamiliarity with "May Morning" ("It is a poem that I remember but I don't know terribly well"). Over 10% of his comments on the poem consisted of negative evaluations, primarily due to the poem's use of conventional imagery, which he attributed to Milton's youth:

> **Stan:** It's a youthful poem, not really one of Milton's best known or most impressive. If I were creating a lecture for a less specialized audience, almost certainly would begin with this one because it's simpler. I mean it actually bears some of the marks of a kind of youthfulness, maybe even, in a way, a kind of naïveté, that is very much absent from the other three poems. It also uses some fairly conventional imagery that one could talk about. *Day's harbinger* and *The Flow'ry May* and *Cowslip* and *pale Primrose* and *Hill and Dale*. So a pretty conventional poem, really, and fairly straightforward, it seems to me, in its aim to celebrate the new day. . . . A poem that is less searching.

Later Stan decided that his MLA paper would focus on the different ways lyric speakers are represented in the four poems, and he suggested a possible historical progression from a speaker who is less individualized to one who is more idiosyncratic and psychologically complex. "May Morning," then, actually became useful to Stan because it provided him with an example of an indistinct, community speaker that he could contrast with the speakers of the other poems, particularly the self-conscious, constantly undercut speaker in Eliot's "Conversation Galante." As Stan planned his abstract, "May Morning" provided him with a starting point and a foil for the more complex poems that followed:

> **Stan:** So as I'm modeling this paper, or creating this paper, with commentary on these poems, I suspect I'll actually probably begin with this one first. . . . You have the speaker putting himself in the context of a group; it's kind of a communal poem in that respect. It is a very traditional

> poem, so it's not surprising that it would be plural, that it would be communal in that regard, one of who knows how many poems that celebrate May or celebrate spring or celebrate the beginning of the day. . . . There is barely an evident persona here at all; in fact, there is no singular "I" or "me." There is at most a plural "we," it's kind of like the speaker is representative of the community. So there is a persona here, but it's a persona very much aligned with a kind of traditional, communal participation in what comes off as even a kind of ritual song.

A second member of the Renaissance group, Tony, also excepted "May Morning" from his overall familiarity with Milton ("I haven't read 'May Morning.' Well I may have read 'May Morning' thirty years ago, but it's been a long time"). Having read "The Flea" first, Tony began thinking about the lyric addressee as a possible focus of his abstract. His assessment of "May Morning" was not overtly negative, but like Stan, he used the poem's simplicity as relief for the more complex poems. Specifically, he contrasted the use of apostrophe in "May Morning" with the more distinct addressee in "The Flea," presumed to be a real woman:

> **Tony:** There is a situation with a female figure, though it's much more attenuated than in Donne's poem, in terms of welcoming May back into the world—it's welcoming a change of scenery and that's about it. . . . In Donne's case it's a real woman we've imagined, we're supposed to imagine, though she's shadowy, but in Milton's case May is a

personification, and in that sense not a woman at all. Tamer, I think, than Donne's poem.

After Tony finished interpreting the remaining two poems, he began to plan his talk along the same lines as Stan, arguing that the historical progression of lyric entailed greater complexity. The thesis of Tony's argument was that the lyric addressee acquires agency and responsiveness in the later poems, at the expense of the speaker's authority:

> **Tony:** You could also, I think, argue that there's a historical progression of sorts in which the later speakers do not seem to have anything like the authority of the earlier speakers—certainly not Milton's speaker, who is kind of a, I don't know, priestly figure whose listener is very close, mute.

Gayl, a member of the Late Victorian/Modernism group, seemed less sure of her negative evaluation of the poem due to her unfamiliarity with Milton. Whereas Stan and Tony expressed no doubt in their assessment of "May Morning," Gayl at first believed the shortcoming might be her own:

> **Gayl:** Milton is somebody I have not been as fully exposed to as somebody who's an English professor is supposed to be. I never took a Milton class. . . . I know how much, how impressive he is when I hear lines quoted, and I know what the structure of the larger poems imply. . . . Maybe in reading Milton and bringing in the connotations of the larger Milton I could do a good job . . . but I am . . . there aren't images here that I'm particularly struck by.

Prompted by "God's Grandeur," Gayl considered crafting a talk based on the four speakers' different relationships to nature. Like Stan and Tony, she found fault with Milton's lack of ironic detachment from his speaker, and though she continued to express some uncertainty about her negative evaluation, she seemed to gain confidence in her judgment as she planned her abstract:

> **Gayl:** So throughout the four poems, again, it's the Milton that seems to unite the human and nature in a simpler, reverential fashion . . . not made complex in any fashion, made fairly direct. Maybe I'm not taking the Milton seriously enough, but for my purposes, I'd say that the combining and the simplicity alone in the Milton don't recommend it. It just seems slighter, perhaps more effortlessly formed.

The 3 participants I have discussed so far heeded the call for papers closely and found ways to incorporate a poem they disliked into their arguments. For 2 participants, however, "May Morning" proved so uninteresting that they decided not to treat it at all in their abstracts. Nancy, part of the Renaissance group and familiar with Milton in general, expressed her distaste for him prior to reading "May Morning" ("Why did they have to choose Milton? Yuck"). Like Stan, Nancy seemed to correlate the public occasion of the poem with its conventionality:

> **Nancy:** I don't really have a lot to say about this. It sounds like it might have been for a public occasion, as opposed to a simply private one. It seems so . . . well . . . Hallmark cardish.

Not finding anything exceptional about the poem upon her first reading, Nancy then scanned it, only to become frustrated with its apparent lack of metrical sophistication:

> **Nancy:** *The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose, / Hail bounteous May that dost inspire / Mirth and youth and warm desire!* So he goes from ten to eight and seven syllables in this little part. It really sounds kind of doggerelish. . . . What is this? Is this something he performed at school? It's kind of banal. Why do we save stuff like this? Just because it's from Milton.

Despite her frustration, Nancy continued to try out possible connotations that would allow her to incorporate the poem into her argument, eventually abandoning the poem entirely:

> **Nancy:** *Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing*, so she has blessed them and they are proud; they tell us that she has blessed them—this is really a boring poem. I'm done with it. Early Milton. I guess I'll just dump this last one and assume that somebody else is going to have to deal with it.

Finally David, a member of the late Victorian/Modernism group, responded similarly to Gayl in that he prefaced his negative evaluation by conceding his lack of Milton expertise. Still he concluded that the poem was too conventional to provoke an interesting response:

> **David:** This is a poem I actually don't know, so I've had to give a cold close reading. This isn't my area of scholarly competence. . . . I mean to me this is actually the least interesting of the four poems that I have been

asked to look at. This just seems like a generic sort of "hail spring, hail spring" kind of poem.

David worked from his strengths as he considered ideas for his MLA talk, setting aside the Milton and Donne poems in order to discover an approach that would connect the Hopkins and Eliot poems. Eventually he decided to discuss the different degrees of erotic sublimation in "God's Grandeur" and "Conversation Galante," and this theme allowed him to bring in "The Flea" as a more frank expression of sexual desire. He struggled to find an erotic charge in "May Morning," however, and in the end decided to omit it from his argument entirely:

> **David:** *The Flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws / The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose*. Primroses smell very sweet. Flowers, new life, flowers, sex organs of plants looking forward to "warm desire." . . . Actually I have nothing interesting to say on the Milton. I think the Milton's actually quite a bad, boring poem, and I'm surprised to see such a bad, boring poem included.

Discussion

Most participants used the term "speaker" or "persona" (others spoke of "Milton" or "the poem") when describing "Song: On May Morning." No one found the speaker to be psychologically complex, however, and this, coupled with Milton's use of conventional imagery, seems to have led to participants' negative response to the poem. Culler (1985) has argued that the New Critical theory of lyric, which privileges highly complex speakers, "creates difficulties both for lyrics whose voice is not individualized,

such as songs, and for . . . . apostrophes [that] trouble attempts to read poems as dramatic monologues" (p. 40). These difficulties are well illustrated in the most extended interpretation of "May Morning" published, by Cleanth Brooks (1951). Despite the fact that the poem clearly depicts a communal spokesperson engaged in apostrophe, Brooks misread the poem as the dramatic utterance of a speaker addressing a woman named May. This maneuver allowed Brooks to produce a characteristic New Critical explication of a complex speaker. None of the participants in this study went to such lengths; instead they dismissed the poem as uninteresting and either excluded it from their abstracts or used it as a foil for the more complex poems. This response is probably not surprising considering that "May Morning" has been virtually ignored in academic criticism.

None of the participants made any attempt to identify with the poem's speaker or recite the poem as if its words were their own. This, too, may have to do with the poem's use of apostrophes, which, as Culler (1985) has noted, are "difficult to see . . . as fictional representations of plausible historical speech acts" (p. 39). It is difficult to imagine a "real" person ever speaking the words of "May Morning," so this may have discouraged participants from assuming the role of speaker.

Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"

"God's Grandeur" was rated "familiar" by 27 of 35 respondents, including all 9 who went on to participate in the think-aloud study. Of the four poems in the study, "God's Grandeur" generated the most interpretive commentary (an average of 916 words) by think-aloud participants, 21% more than for the next highest, "Conversation Galante." "God's Grandeur" was the most admired by think-aloud participants, with 7 of 9 offering positive evaluations. At various turns it was called a "wonderful," "great,"

"moving," and "cool" poem. All 9 participants addressed "God's Grandeur" in their MLA abstracts.

Jen's familiarity with the entire Hopkins canon led her to focus on the conventional aspects of "God's Grandeur"; the poem was composed at a time when Hopkins was just beginning his experiments with sprung rhythm and is not nearly as experimental as later efforts. After beginning with a line-by-line interpretation, Jen recognized the sonnet form about midway through her reading, and then made this problem-and-resolution structure her main interpretive template:

> **Jen:** The idea that we don't walk barefoot anymore, we wear clothes, we've smudged and bleared and smeared the landscape. . . . But, this being a sonnet—what kind of a sonnet is this? God, foil, oil, rod, trod, toil, soil, shod—okay, it's a Petrarchan sonnet. And so we would expect the turn, and we get it. *And for all this, nature is never spent.* That's the turn line. . . . So it really is a classical sonnet with the thesis in the octave and the antithesis in the sextet.

Nearly half the lines in "God's Grandeur" are standard iambic pentameter, and because Jen anticipated a more fully sprung rhythm, she saw the poem's (by most standards) highly varied meter as conventional:

> **Jen:** It is absolutely Petrarchan. But within that rather tight form it's certainly not all iambic pentameter. *World broods with warm breast and with ah bright wings*. Oh, perhaps it is. [Tapping out stresses] *The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out, like shining from*

shook foil. Yes, it kind of is. I'm used to Hopkins having stretched the sonnet form, but he doesn't stretch it here.

The poem's conventionality, in fact, became the thrust of Jen's MLA talk, as she planned to discuss how adherence to the sonnet form continues to yield effective poems:

> **Jen:** I'll have a lot to say about "God's Grandeur," a lot to say about the sonnet, a lot to say about how remarkable it is that that form that started off in the Middle Ages is still working here, especially in English. It's hard to do *abba abba* in English because there are so few good rhymes in English.

Like Jen, David used his knowledge of sonnet form to guide his reading. After noting the problem statement in the octave ("We actually get humanity here as the agent of the corruption of nature, the destruction of nature"), he voiced aloud his genre expectations as a way of monitoring his interpretation ("Okay, sestet, promise of resolution to the problem described"). On the other hand, David found "God's Grandeur" mostly unconventional according to Hopkins' wont ("Has pretty much all the features of the mature Hopkins: run-on lines, sprung rhythm, inscape"). And while Jen expressed surprise that the innovative Hopkins would adhere to such a conventional form, David noted the conflict between Hopkins' experimental poetics and traditional theme:

> **David:** *It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed.* Okay, we get the run-on line, then, form mimicking the content. The ooze of oil crushed goes into the next line pretty much the same way oil would move. But actually sort of . . . I mean it's interesting that these . . . ooze . . . kind

> of negative connotations, and kind of working this sort of formal modernity in the praise of nature in interesting ways because the rest of the poem sort of argues that modernity is the enemy of nature. So we've got an interesting tension between formal properties and more specific content of the poem.

This paradox of form and content became a major theme of David's MLA abstract, as he decided to write about poetic sublimation in Hopkins. He argued that, in one sense, formal innovations are the means by which Hopkins displaces erotic desire ("I look at 'God's Grandeur' as a poem of deep sublimation where erotic charge get put into nature and then displaced on one level to God"). In a second sense, these innovations themselves are a sublimation of Hopkins' uncomfortable fascination with modernity:

> **David:** We're kind of in a deep thematic tradition within English poetry . . . a series of anxieties around innovation and modernity and mechanization, which are interestingly appropriated in the formal attributes of the poetry in the very moment that they're used to produce a critique.

Participants' interpretations of the poem's political message also seemed to be influenced by whether they found its formal features to be conventional or not. For example, Reggie produced an ecocritical reading of the poem, and he argued that the conventional religious sonnet form underscored the speaker's careless attitude toward the environment. The poem's speaker implies that the problem described in the octave, humanity's failure to appreciate the grandeur of God in nature, is primarily a spiritual

failing, whereas Reggie saw the problem in terms of economic exploitation of natural resources:

> **Reggie:** *The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;* I'm getting images of refineries here, refineries on the Texas coast. *It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed*. Crushed, crushed—it must be crushed coal. *The world is charged with the grandeur of God.* The world is full of—God's grandeur is power, potential power, the power potential in petroleum, the power potential in coal, the power potential in coal and oil. *It will flame out, like shining from shook foil*. Again, images of the world being disrupted so that this stuff comes up, and then the stuff being lit on fire, flaming, or in the case of oil wells, flaming out.

Standard readings of the famous image, "ooze of oil crushed," have usually stressed positive connotations: God's inherent presence in nature (such as in an olive) can be released through human effort. Reggie was aware of this reading, but ultimately he discarded it in favor of one involving the processing of coal:

> **Reggie:** I don't know whether you could talk about oil in terms of the natural resource oil as opposed to something like olive oil, since you don't . . . well I guess you crush; you could crush some things to get . . . you can crush coal to get oil . . . crushed, crushed, it must be crushed coal. [A bit later] *It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed*. Okay, I'm

> moving away from olive oil, forget that. It's got to be petroleum; I believe that is petroleum.

Regardless of whether one judges the wrongdoing in spiritual or secular terms, no one disagrees that humanity's treatment of nature is decried in the poem's octave. Reggie's harshest critique, then, was reserved for the sestet, where, according to form, the poem ends with an emotional crescendo and neat resolution that Reggie found disturbing:

> **Reggie:** *Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.* He doesn't seem to suggest that we not do this. . . . So I think that I would have to read it as a, perhaps a, at first initially bleak sounding, but finally affirmative, or perhaps naïvely affirmative, poem in that Hopkins seems to assume that no matter what man does, nature will continue to replenish itself. So this would be a great poem for the Bush administration to use to justify the destruction of nature everywhere because God will step in and replenish it for us.

In contrast to Reggie, Nancy focused on Hopkins' disruption of the Italian sonnet form, and she argued that this disruption carries an implicit proto-feminist message. A member of the Renaissance group and accustomed to sonnets from that period, Nancy found "God's Grandeur" to be unconventional both in theme ("A Petrarchan sonnet that has a non-Pertrarchan subject matter") and in meter ("That [meter] is kind of weird. I don't associate that with any Renaissance poetry. . . . One thing I like about Hopkins is that the meter is a lot more playful"). She found feminist undertones in the tension between the problem statement and its resolution:

> **Nancy:** *Why do men then now not reck his rod?* There, I would contrast that very masculine, phallic image with the Holy Spirit hanging out at the end of the poem over the dawn—a very gentle, positive image of the future.

As mentioned previously, the sonnet's turn in the sestet, and particularly the final two lines, was significant to Reggie's ecocritical interpretation of the poem because it provides a (too) neat resolution to the complex, ongoing problem described in the octave. In an analogous way, the poetic turn was significant for Nancy, but she saw it as an unexpected subversion of gender categories:

> **Nancy:** *Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings*. So here's the kicker. Even though it's kind of . . . it still has almost a conventional ending because the whole poem turns not just on the last six, but the last two, the thing that's interesting to me is that the Holy Ghost seems to be a girl bird here, since it's usually the female who sits on the eggs. To me that's one of the more interesting questions for today's audience—the gendering of the Holy Ghost. Even if Hopkins didn't mean that, there's like a . . . potential in this poem that is very feminist, maybe. I've never actually come across a girl Holy Ghost that I can think of. . . . This poem is way more feminine than I would have thought.

Discussion

The paradoxical elements in "God's Grandeur" have fascinated critics throughout the past 70 years, and the poem still elicited wonder from the participants in this study, despite their familiarity with it. Cleanth Brooks (1947) famously wrote that "the language of poetry is the language of paradox" (p. 3). One way to describe participants' response to "God's Grandeur" is to say that the language of poetry *and* criticism is the language of paradox (or perhaps aporia). Jen remarked that Hopkins, a great experimenter with poetic form, seemed satisfied with a fairly conventional sonnet, which illustrates the durability of the sonnet form. David, on the other hand, found Hopkins' deviations from sonnet form to be quite significant. For him, this indicated a paradox between Hopkins' attraction to technical innovation and his nostalgia for simpler times. For Reggie, the traditional form of "God's Grandeur" echoes the poem's outdated attitude toward the earth. Although the sonnet's problem statement indicates concern for the earth's diminishing resources, the sestet reassures us with an assertion of God's undiminished presence in the earth. Nancy argued that Hopkins exploits the traditional form of the sonnet to subvert the gender roles assigned to the Christian deity. After establishing the expected masculine image of God in the octave, Hopkins resolves the poem with a feminized depiction of God nurturing the globe.

Participants' responses to "God's Grandeur" epitomize the tension between innovation and convention that runs throughout the Hopkins canon. Hopkins believed so strongly in the inherent potentialities of the sonnet form (one might think of it as the sonnet's inscape) that he composed 40 sonnets that never deviate from the proportion and rhyme scheme of the Italian form. "God's Grandeur" follows the conventional pattern of problem statement in the octave, resolution in the sestet, and emotional crescendo that

climaxes in the final lines. The poem is not written in strict iambic pentameter, however, because Hopkins believed that this meter failed to capture the sonnet's true rhythm. In a letter he argued that "the reason why the sonnet has never been so effective or successful in England as in Italy . . . [is that] it is not so long as the Italian sonnet; it is not long enough" (qtd. in Mariani 1970, p. 323). Hopkins recognized that longer vowel sounds made sonnets in the Italian language absolutely longer, so he attempted to lengthen the English line by employing devices such as caesuras, repetition, monosyllabic words, and the sprung rhythm. While Hopkins intended for this constant tinkering to make individual lines truer to the original sonnet form, it produces a highly unconventional rhythm for readers accustomed to English versions of the Italian sonnet. Hopkins also seemed unaware that his use of unconventional poetic diction and syntax, which he felt necessary to capture the inscape of poetic subjects, made his poetry difficult. Robert Bridges, Hopkins' friend and literary executor, wrote in the original preface to the *Poems* that Hopkins "was not sufficiently aware of his obscurity, and he could not understand why his friends found his sentences so difficult" (qtd. in Gardner 1966, p. 241).

Of all the poems in this study, "God's Grandeur" most clearly lends itself to the reader-as-speaker approach. The speaker does not seem like a character in a drama, as does the speaker in "The Flea," nor is he representing the community or engaged in apostrophe, as is the speaker in "May Morning." Rather, "God's Grandeur" seems "to represent an inner life in such a manner that it is assumable by others" (Vendler, 1995, p. xi). Still, no participant accepted the poem's invitation to assume this inner life. All read the poem as an utterance they were overhearing.

Eliot's "Conversation Galante"

"Conversation Galante" was rated "less than familiar" by 31 of 35 survey respondents, including all 9 who went on to participate in the think-aloud study. Of the four poems in the study, "Conversation Galante" generated the second most interpretive commentary (an average of 755 words) by think-aloud participants, but it generated more comments devoted to basic comprehension than the other three poems combined. In short, participants encountered more difficulty determining the plain sense meaning of "Conversation Galante" than any of the other poems. As with "The Flea," participants evinced more admiration than affection for the poem, and one participant expressed a common sentiment in claiming that "Eliot on the erotic is awful. There's no such thing as good sex in Eliot's corpus." One participant excluded "Conversation Galante" from his MLA abstract because of his dislike for the poem.

Eliot's use of Laforgian irony in "Conversation Galante" meant that participants rarely felt confident in their interpretation of the speakers' tones. Nancy, for example, completely reversed her interpretation over the course of her reading as she became convinced of multiple layers of irony. Like most participants, she struggled to comprehend the poem upon her first reading ("I need to say something interesting, but right now I'm just trying to understand what's going on here, who gets the lines, etc."), and she coped with this difficulty by relying on her prior knowledge of Eliot:

> **Nancy:** Hmmm . . . okay . . . this totally goes along with my views of T.S. Eliot as sexist, in any case. She seems to give herself away as narcissistic, but also too dumb to realize that perhaps she's the vacuous one. It's an annoying poem. It confirms my dislike of T. S. Eliot.

Upon rereading the poem, however, Nancy began to consider that there might be more depth to the woman's responses:

> **Nancy:** *At a stroke our mad poetics to confute*. Mad poetics. He's addressing something bigger than he has been before. It's not just the moon, it's the poetics, and she's confuting them. Ah! Is there humor? So far she doesn't seem very funny, but I don't know—maybe it's ironic, maybe it's not, maybe it's both. Who's making fun of whom in this poem? Who doesn't get it? It's interesting. I'm not sure where it leaves us.

Nancy moved on to the other poems at this point (she had read "Conversation Galante" first), as she did not want to commit to an interpretation before examining the project as a whole. When she returned to "Conversation Galante" in preparation for her abstract, she had become even more confident of Eliot's positive portrayal of the female speaker:

> **Nancy:** With "Conversation Galante" I think my temptation would be to read it from a feminist point of view, maybe try to figure out just how Eliot is taking the speaker, who is and isn't him, and the lady—whether in fact it is a misogynist poem or whether he's mocking the misogyny of the speaker, which I think is perfectly possible here. To me the woman has the better of the argument, and I think the poem is constructed to give her that, but I'm not absolutely sure.

Another way participants coped with the ambiguity of the speakers' tones was to avoid a detailed interpretation altogether. On his first reading of the poem, Stan proceeded in a manner similar to Nancy; he anticipated difficulty before beginning

("Now Eliot's poem I just really need to read aloud since I don't know this one") and stated explicitly when comprehension broke down ("The toughest stanza, it seems to me, is that last one, which I would have to really work through a little bit more"). As he became more comfortable with the poem, Stan, like Nancy, reasoned that the key to interpretation was determining when the speakers were being ironic and when they were being sincere:

> **Stan:** The tone is not entirely clear to me, whether it's said ironically or even somewhat sarcastically—I mean the language at least seems a little overstated in calling her "the eternal humorist" and "eternal enemy of the absolute." The dialogue is the thing to flesh out, probably. Especially working with that last stanza, and maybe offering some possible readings, and especially relative to tone, it seems to me one has to make a judgment about whether the tone is purposeful and serious.

Stan postponed this judgment until he had finished reading all the poems, and then the direction of his MLA abstract allowed him to avoid making a final judgment at all. As mentioned earlier, Stan argued that the four poems represented an historical progression from a lyric speaker who is less individualized to one who is more psychologically complex. Part of what makes the speaker in "Conversation Galante" complex, so Stan's argument went, is that, unlike the speakers in the other three poems, we cannot pin down his intentions with any certainty. This uncertainty persists despite the fact that the speaker is continually identified as "I," and in that sense is a more palpable presence than the speakers in the other poems:

> **Stan:** The point that I would be making here is that the speaker is here both more transparent and perhaps also more obscure. So without necessarily being able to say precisely or fully what the poem as a whole is about, I think I could say pretty confidently, could pretty confidently make that claim, that the speaker is at once very transparently present and at the same time the nature of that relationship and what we are to understand about the speaker is, I think, purposely left somewhat in doubt. Purposely puts us in a position to sort through who that speaker is.

Confusion among participants arose also from Eliot's obscure allusions and his failure to reveal the poetic situation through orientational phrases. Like Nancy and Stan, Tony anticipated difficulty with "Conversation Galante," going so far as to adjust the order in which he read the poems ("And finally Eliot, I left it for last in part because I thought it was going to be the most difficult"), but he was more concerned with understanding the poem's imagery than the tone of its speakers:

> **Tony:** Ah, well, a bit more puzzling this poem than the others. *It may be Prester John's balloon*. Prester John, Prester John was supposed to have traveled to the end of the world or something, I believe; I'll have to look him up. And a balloon, perhaps . . . I don't know why he has a balloon. Eliot with his usual wide array of allusions to all sorts of esoteric, quasi-esoteric knowledge . . . situation harder to come by.

Like several other participants, Tony was not always sure which persona was speaking, particularly the last line.

> **Tony:** And then there's that last comment. *And—"Are we then so serious?"* It's not attributed to anyone as their other comments are. One possibility is of course that the speaker is speaking, but I don't think that makes much sense at all. I think it's her last humoristic comment.

Like Stan, he decided that, rather than risk a specific interpretation, he would make the poem's inscrutability itself the topic of his discussion:

> **Tony:** I guess I might want to say something about the Metaphysical poem and the difficulty, the relative difficulty, of the Metaphysical poem that Eliot talks about in his essay on the Metaphysical poets. . . . I would want to talk about Modernism and Modernism's valuation of the conceits of Metaphysical poetry, Modernism's difficulty, the idea that poetry in the world now must be difficult, which was Eliot's idea.

Finally, Reggie dealt with his uncertainty by making it part of his interaction with the MLA audience. As with the other participants discussed, Reggie anticipated difficulty ("I'm going to have to take some time to read this because I don't know the poem"), and he aggravated his confusion by attributing one of the male speaker's lines to the female speaker. What caused him the most trouble, however, was a line describing the female speaker that he could not reconcile with the characterization of her in rest of the poem:

> **Reggie:** Eternal enemy of the absolute? Eternal enemy of the absolute? The line that has me completely baffled is the "eternal enemy of the absolute." *You, madam, are the eternal humorist*. Yes. Eternal enemy of the absolute . . . huh. I could totally understand that if it said exactly the

> opposite: eternal enemy of the changeable, the moon being changeable. The absolute?! I do not understand that line. *Giving our vagrant moods the slightest twist! With your air indifferent and imperious / At a stroke our mad poetics to confute.* She seems to be a friend of the absolute, someone who wants the absolute, who wants the answer, who wants something hard and fast.

Unable to resolve the conflict on his own, he decided simply to make it part of his talk:

> **Reggie:** For MLA I'm going to focus in the opening on the one line that seems to me to make absolutely no sense whatsoever in this poem and ask, quite seriously, "what the hell does this mean?" My focus here is going to be having the other people tell me what the heck that final stanza has to do with the rest of the poem.

Discussion

Both "Song: On May Morning" and "Conversation Galante" have been ignored in published criticism, but they elicited drastically different responses from participants in this study. The straightforwardness of Milton's poem meant that participants were confident in dismissing it as minor, but no one dismissed Eliot's difficult poem as simple or youthful or conventional. On the other hand, participants' responses did not offer the possibility of extended interpretations in the way "The Flea" and "God's Grandeur" did. "Conversation Galante" was the only poem that participants had difficulty comprehending, and although Stan, Tony, and Reggie found ways to use the poem in their abstracts, they did not risk extended interpretations. A telling example of the poem's

inscrutability is its last line. The consensus opinion is that the woman speaks this line, but at least one published interpretation (Rees, 1974) attributes it to the man. Tony struggled with this question until finally deciding on the woman as speaker, but Reggie never did make this adjustment.

In "The Metaphysical Poets" (1932), Eliot proclaimed that "poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results" (p. 248). Difficulty is one of the characteristics that drew Eliot to the metaphysical poets in English, and he wrote that Laforgue is "nearer to the 'school of Donne' than any modern English poet" (p. 249). In addition to the allusiveness and absence of connecting phrases that characterize all of Eliot's poetry, a nearly impenetrable sense of irony marks those poems directly influenced by Laforgue. In his comparison of the two poets, Shanahan (1953) observes that Eliot and Laforgue often feature a male speaker who, "while mocking his anguish, does not repudiate it. . . . he makes fun of it, but retains it, for all that" (pp. 120, 119). This means it is almost impossible to interpret the words of these speakers as either ironic or sincere, since they are almost always both and neither. Furthermore, the poems in which Eliot and Laforgue present a dialogue between a man and woman (e.g., "Conversation Galante" and "Autre Complainte de Lord Pierrot") include no explanation of the situation or the relationship between the two conversers. This, combined with the poets' technique of "capturing the exact tone of our speech and letting the silliness of it appear by simply putting it down faithfully without comment" (Shanahan, p. 124), makes difficult even a literal understanding of the poems.

Aside from its difficulty, "Conversation Galante" is a duologue and thus more clearly dramatic even than "The Flea." Not surprisingly, then, no participants spoke the poem's words as their own. Instead, all approached the poem as if they were overhearing a conversation between potential lovers.

Conclusion

Every professor in this study read each poem as the utterance of a dramatic speaker. None showed any inclination to assume the role of speaker, although this behavior may be attributable to the task instructions. Participants were asked to read poems for the purposes of constructing a scholarly argument. But many advocates of the reader-as-speaker approach want to *avoid* converting literary experience into knowledge by means of scholarly interpretation. A different task, one less geared toward knowledge making, might make literature professors more inclined to perform lyrics in the ways Altieri (2001), Fry (1995), and Thurston (2000) described. Still, the fact that no professor in this study assumed the role of speaker again raises the question addressed at the end of Chapter 1: what possibilities for *writing* about lyric are offered by the reader-as-speaker approach to *reading* lyric? Altieri, for one, opposes his theory of performance to "knowledge and judgment in accord with stateable criteria" (p. 260), but it remains to be seen how this way of reading, so opposed to academic knowledge, can accommodate the conventions of scholarly argument.

Perhaps the most surprising finding presented here is the extent to which participants' initial processing mirrored the interpretive patterns in published criticism on the four poems. "Song: On May Morning" and "Conversation Galante" have received minimal critical attention, and as a group, participants produced less elaborate

interpretations of these poems than they did for "The Flea" and "God's Grandeur." Like those who have written on "May Morning," participants in this study dismissed Milton's poem as slight and derivative. Participants showed more respect for "Conversation Galante," but they emphasized the poem's nearly impenetrable irony, just as scholars have most often discussed the poem in terms of Laforgian irony. As in recent criticism of "The Flea," participants focused on the gender roles of the poem's speaker and addressee. And participants followed the tendencies of published criticism by focusing on the formal elements, especially paradox, used in "God's Grandeur."

Empirical investigations of poetry reading have demonstrated the accuracy of Culler's (1975) descriptions of poetry reading conventions. Culler intended these conventions to describe basic literary competence, and, indeed, studies indicate that most students have internalized them by the time they leave high school (Earthman, 1992; Eva-Wood, 2004a, 2004b; Hoffstaedter, 1987; Knapp, 2002; Peskin, 1998; Shimron, 1980; Svensson, 1987; Viehoff, 1986). In a similar way, the professors in this study seem to have internalized conventions of literary scholarship. They activated these conventions with surprising skill and accuracy, even when reading unfamiliar poems or poems outside their area of specialization. The roots of literary knowledge appear to run deep, and in Chapters 4 and 5 I examine some of the ways *new* knowledge is grown.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Processing Poetry, Talking Topoi: A Study of Knowledge-Making in Literary Studies

Writing-in-the-disciplines researchers, most of whom are English faculty, have begun to look within their own departments at how knowledge in literary studies is constructed in scholarly articles (Bazerman, 1988; Fahnestock & Secor, 1988, 1991; MacDonald, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1994; Wilder, 2002, 2005). These analyses tell us much about textual forms of literary argument, but they do not reveal the inventional processes by which literary scholars arrive at those arguments. This chapter complements previous analyses of scholarly articles by describing the inventional processes of established literary scholars as they complete a reading-to-write task.

I address two primary research questions about the commonplaces, or "special topoi" (described in more detail below), of literary argument. First, do the special topoi of written literary argument appear in the reading-to-write processes of literary scholars, and if so, are some more prevalent during initial processing of literary texts and others during argument planning? Those who have analyzed scholarly articles in literary studies often conclude that literary knowledge building (i.e., the accumulation of new knowledge) is weak and that, instead, literary argument is "epideictic," full of rhetorical display and celebrations of the field's values. Thus, a second research question asks: what does scholars' use of the special topoi during their inventional processes tell us about knowledge building in literary studies? The answers to these questions should interest writing-in-the-disciplines researchers, but they should also be useful to literary scholars who recently have critiqued the field's disciplinarity and knowledge-building tendencies (Downing, Harkin, Shumway, & Sosnoski, 1987; Downing & Sosnoski, 1995; Ohmann, 1996; Sosnoski, 1994, 1995; Spanos, 1993). Expanding descriptions of literary argument also has important pedagogical implications because the values and assumptions they represent are often communicated tacitly in the classroom (Herrington, 1988; Wilder, 2002).

Knowledge Building in Literary Studies

The first writing-in-the-disciplines researchers to analyze scholarly articles in literary studies argued that knowledge is not communally constructed in the humanities. These researchers contrasted scholarly literary publications with research articles in the sciences and concluded that literary criticism is not directed toward the accumulation of

new knowledge. Bazerman (1988) compared a 1978 *PMLA* article with exemplary articles in molecular biology and sociology and found that, whereas the scientific articles attempted to solve disciplinary problems and then advance beyond them, the literary studies article attempted to complicate understanding of a sonnet by William Wordsworth, to avoid reducing the poem to a description that would stand as knowledge (p. 39). Along these same lines, MacDonald (1987, 1989, 1992, 1994) examined four New Historicist articles published in the 1980s and found little sense of disciplinary "progress." The writers worked on "diffuse," isolated disciplinary problems and made little attempt to relate their inquiries to other work in the field. Fahnestock and Secor (1991) used a larger sample of work in literary studies, analyzing 20 articles from 10 different journals published between 1978 and 1982. Like Bazerman and MacDonald, they found scarce evidence of progressive knowledge building and termed literary argument "epideictic" in the sense that it "keeps alive a traditional set of texts by subjecting them to continual exegesis" (p. 94). Fahnestock and Secor took their descriptions a step further, however, by detailing the typical paths of literary argument. They argued that professional discourse in literary studies employs a limited set of field-specific warrants, or special topoi. According to Fahnestock and Secor, all the special topoi assume the irreducible complexity of literature, which prevents literary phenomena from being reduced and condensed in the manner required for progressive knowledge building.

This portrayal of literary studies as an enterprise that rejects the goal of communal knowledge building is based on analyses of scholarly articles written in the

1970s and 1980s; analyses of more recent work in literary studies suggest that the field may be moving more toward a model of progressive knowledge building. In Wilder's (2005) replication of Fahnestock and Secor's (1991) study using a sample of articles published between 1999 and 2001, she found that critics took great care to ground their interpretations in well-documented historical and cultural contexts. This tendency was so pronounced, in fact, she identified it as a new topos: "context." For example, in one of the articles in Wilder's sample, Richardson (2000) reassesses Sarah Grand's feminism in the face of critical consensus by accusing previous critics of anachronism and providing deeper historical contextualization. Wilder's finding calls into question Fahnestock and Secor's argument that the mere search for deeper meanings matters most in literary argument, that critics in their sample did "not distinguish between finding and constructing a reality, or worry over the possible difference" (p. 85). Another addition Wilder made to the special topoi similarly challenges Fahnestock and Secor's characterization of literary criticism as epideictic. Wilder's "mistaken critic" topos refers to literary scholars' increased tendency to relate their work to previous critics, which, she argues, indicates "a dramatic shift away from the practices of isolated meditation on textual particulars . . . and toward a program of knowledge-building" (p. 111). In addition to these new topoi, Wilder observed increased use of Fahnestock and Secor's "paradigm" topos, leading her to speculate that literary studies may be reconfiguring itself as "a community of researchers interested in explaining texts with previously constructed theories and interested in testing social theories in texts" (p. 94).

Table 4.1 lists the names and brief descriptions of the special topoi.

Table 4.1

Special Topoi of Literary Studies.

Fahnestock and Secor (1991)	
Topos	**Description**
Appearance/Reality	"Real," latent, more complex meanings in a literary text lurk beneath "apparent," surface, simple meanings.
Ubiquity	A literary device, previously unnoticed, appears everywhere throughout a literary text and warrants an alternative interpretation.
Paradox	A literary text contains irreconcilable opposites, the existence of which precludes the derivation of a single, simple interpretation.
Contemptus mundi	A literary text expresses despair (sometimes beneath a hopeful surface) over the modern state of society.
Paradigm	A conceptual template (Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis) is placed over the details of a literary text to produce alternate readings.
Wilder (2005)	
Topos	**Description**
Context *	A contextual historical template is placed over the details of a literary text.
Mistaken critic **	"Real," latent, more complex meanings in a literary text have been missed or misread by previous critics.
Social Justice	Literary interpretation is connected to contemporary life and is used to advocate social change.

*Subvariant of Paradigm

**Subvariant of Appearance/Reality

Analysis

In order to parse the transcripts or "protocols" at a basic level, I applied a primary coding scheme consisting of six categories for reading behavior that were developed both deductively and inductively. Four categories (rereading, comprehension, evaluation, metacomment) were drawn from Charney (1993) and reflect reading processes. The remaining two categories (interpretation, argument) were developed by me from an initial examination of the protocols and reflect reading-to-write processes. One might define literary argument as "defended interpretation," so differences between interpretation and argument comments were largely contextual. In general, comments were coded as interpretation if participants uttered them in the context of first working out the purport and significance of the poems. Comments were coded as argument if participants uttered them in the context of planning their MLA talks. Figure 4.1 provides definitions and examples.

Figure 4.1
Coding Scheme.

Reading Processes

- **Rereading:** A verbatim repetition of text already read.
- **Comprehension:** Problem-solving episode to figure out the literal meaning of the text.
    - "nocturne is a night song, right? I think so"
- **Evaluation:** An explicit evaluation of the text.
    - "not really one of Milton's best"
- **Metacomment:** Comment on the reader's habitual behavior or current reading strategy.
    - "I'm going to read these in chronological order"

Reading-to-Write Processes

- **Interpretation:** Included comments that:

- clarified ambiguous, difficult, or figurative passages.
    - "moon imagery suggesting sentimentality"
    - "the 'morning star,' of course, is Venus"

- described the text's literary features.
    - "we're kind of in the landscape of synesthesia,"
    - "alliteration in 'grandeur of God'"

- analyzed the text's artistic effects.
    - "repetition of 'trod' makes us trod as we read it"
    - "word inversion, forcing closer reading"

- unpacked greater significance buried in the text.
    - "ultimately the poem itself is a manifestation of God's grandeur,"
    - "incipient themes that get picked up again in *Paradise Lost*"

- **Argument:** Comment related to planning or composing in response to the prompt.
    - "my argument can't really account for that line,"
    - "for my abstract I'll frame a conversation between these two poems"

After the protocols were categorized using the primary coding scheme, I analyzed the reading-to-write comments (interpretation and argument) using a secondary coding scheme (Figure 4.2) drawn from Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and Wilder's (2005) descriptions of the special topoi of literary studies. Only interpretation and argument comments were analyzed because they represent the processes that lead directly to written literary arguments; also they comprised the overwhelming majority (81%) of the total protocols. Five categories (*appearance/reality*, *paradigm*, *paradox*, *ubiquity*, *contemptus mundi*) were drawn from the special topoi identified by Fahnestock and Secor. Three more categories (*mistaken critic*, *context*, *social justice*) were drawn from Wilder's additions to the special topoi. I chose this analytic procedure for two reasons. First, although Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder use the special topoi as a means of audience analysis, classical rhetoricians used topoi as inventional tools, so they seem

appropriate for analyzing the processes by which scholars develop professional arguments. Second, Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder analyzed a larger sample of articles than other researchers who have studied scholarly articles in literary studies, and together they present the most complete diachronic view of literary argument available. Their robust descriptions offer the best opportunity to connect analyses of written argument with reading-to-write processes. Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder's special topoi are not mutually exclusive categories. For example, a critic might bring in contextual information to challenge standard, apparent meanings. Or the paradigm of feminist interpretation might be applied to advocate social change. Because of this fluidity among the special topoi, I double- and even triple-coded comments when appropriate.

Figure 4.2
Topoi Coding Scheme.

- **Appearance/reality:** Assertion of a deeper, "real" meaning beneath the surface of an "apparent" meaning.
    - "there's a buried sexual theme here just rising to the surface"

- **Mistaken critic (subvariant of appearance/reality):** Assertion that the critic's own interpretation is "really" valid, as opposed to the "apparent" validity of previous interpretations.
    - "that line, I think, was quoted against Eliot at various points as his saying that women are the eternal enemy of the absolute. Seems a little unfair"

- **Paradigm:** Placement of a conceptual template over the details of the text in order to produce a reading.
    - "I might give a feminist reading of the Donne and Eliot"

- **Context (subvariant of paradigm):** Placement of a historical or cultural context template over the details of the text.
    - "that's about it for a first reading of these. Now I'll start beginning to look at them in ways that connect them with history"

- **Paradox:** Discovery of apparently irreconcilable opposites in the text.

    - "the speaker is here both more transparent and perhaps also more obscure"

- **Social justice:** Comment that connects life and literature by advocating social justice and social change.
    - "this would be a great poem for the Bush administration to use to justify the destruction of nature everywhere"

- **Ubiquity.** Assertion that a textual entity, at first concealed, is in fact everywhere in the text.
    - "I'm just kind of running through and finding 'spring' everywhere now that I'm thinking along that line"

- ***Contemptus mundi:*** Comment on the despair of modern society.
    - "there's a historical progression toward an absence of authority in which the speaker is always undercut"

Findings

Amount and Type of Special Topoi Used

Of the sum total of interpretation and argument words taken together, only 30% fit into the special topoi coding scheme. This is not surprising considering that Fahnestock and Secor and Wilder's special topoi were drawn from long scholarly articles, data which differ significantly from the transcripts produced by a 1-hour reading and writing think-aloud task. Each of the 9 participants applied numerous special topoi, and altogether they produced more than 10,000 words that were coded. These words were double- and triple-coded when appropriate, leading to a total of 16,616 units. The distribution of the topoi is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Distribution of Topoi.

Topos	Interpretation		Argument		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Appearance/Reality	6724	58.4	1837	35.8	8561	51.5
Paradigm	1733	15.0	1841	35.9	3574	21.5
Paradox	701	6.0	505	9.8	1206	7.2
Context	790	6.8	396	7.7	1186	7.1
Social Justice	624	5.4	541	10.5	1165	7.0
Ubiquity	832	7.2			832	5.0
Mistaken Critic	60	.5			60	.3
Contemptus Mundi	32	.2			32	.1
Total	11496		5120		1661	

The *appearance/reality* topos appeared in 52% of protocols words (8651), meaning it was applied more frequently than all the other topoi combined. This topos appeared more frequently in interpretation segments (58%) than argument (36%), which suggests that it was used most often during the early stages of reading. The *paradox* topos appeared in 7% of protocol words (1206); although it comprised a higher percentage of argument segments (10%) than interpretation (6%), these numbers were skewed by one participant who used the *paradox* topos extensively in planning his MLA argument. A higher number of individual instances of the *paradox* topos appeared during interpretation. The *ubiquity* topos, comprising 5% of protocol words (832), appeared only in interpretation segments, which suggests that it was used exclusively during initial text processing. Technically the *contemptus mundi* and *mistaken critic* topoi appeared only in interpretation segments, but at less that 1% combined, these topoi were virtually nonexistent in the data.

The *paradigm* topos appeared in 22% of protocol words (3574), making it the second-most frequently used topos overall. The *paradigm* topos was more prevalent in argument segments (36%) than interpretation (15%), so participants used this topos more frequently later in the reading-to-write process, during argument planning. Also following this pattern were the *context* and *social justice* topoi, which appeared in 7% of protocol words (1186 and 1165, respectively) overall. The frequency with which these topoi appeared in argument and interpretation segments was as follows: *context* 8% of argument, 7% of interpretation; *social justice* 11% of argument, 5% of interpretation.

How Readers Applied the Special Topoi of Literary Studies

In this section I describe in more detail how participants drew on the special topoi to interpret the poems and construct their MLA arguments. Space restrictions prevent me from discussing every participant's use of every topos, so I have confined my attention to those readers whose responses were both representative and complex. I do not discuss the *contemptus mundi* and *mistaken critic* topoi because they were virtually nonexistent in the data. In excerpts from the think aloud protocols, the reader's comments are represented in ordinary typeface, while the text from the poem being read is represented in italics.

Interpretation and Argument Processes

Appearance/Reality

The *appearance/reality* topos appeared in more protocol words than all the other topoi combined, and it was the only topos to appear in the protocols of all 9 participants. Sexual connotations frequently occupied the "deeper" level of an apparently innocent, "surface" image. For example, in his interpretation of Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," Tony perceived buried sexual significance in the image of the Holy Ghost as a female bird:

> **Tony:** The Holy Ghost is imagined as a bird, and yet the Holy Ghost has a warm breast, which of course men can have, but one thinks of women more than men and so on. So there's a kind of asexual sexuality, bisexual sexuality, but very attenuated, much more distant from the surface of the poem.

Reggie detected a double-entendre in the word "use" in Donne's "The Flea":

> **Reggie:** "Use" meaning at the surface level that that would be what she'd

be used to doing, or that would be the common thing for her to do, but "use" moved toward the more marital or sexual connotation, meaning if I used you, if I had used you, then you might be apt to kill me.

Participants also used their prior knowledge of the poets to speculate about possible implicit meanings. Nancy applied her knowledge of *Paradise Lost* to provide a deeper reading of the unfamiliar "Song: On May Morning":

> **Nancy:** The only thing that makes me . . . his gendering of the morning star—I think the morning star is Venus. Is there something more erotic here than meets the eye? Oh wow! I just had another thought. Another name for the morning star, I think, is Lucifer. I wonder if you could make the point that Lucifer and Venus are kind of inchoate themes that he's going to develop in a totally different way in *Paradise Lost*. It's very buried if you're going to try to make that case.

Participants demanded that their interpretations be supported by ample textual evidence, which helps explain why the *appearance/reality* topos appeared more frequently in interpretation segments (58%) than argument (36%). Often participants abandoned developing interpretations about deeper meanings (and thus did not advance them to the argument-planning stage) upon deciding that they were not supported by the text. In this sense, the *appearance/reality* topos was tied closely to the first stages of invention: upon first encountering the poems, participants would search for latent, hidden, deep meanings that might later be developed into arguments. The most explicit recognition of this strategy was made by Reggie, who before interpreting "The Flea"

acknowledged that he was concerned only with unearthing less obvious meanings in a poem whose standard interpretation is established:

> **Reggie:** A very familiar poem, so all the obvious things would be things that I guess one would not want to say in the session. That's the first thing I'm thinking of: what can I say that's new? Everybody knows the conceit; everybody knows how it works; everybody knows that the bloods mingle inside the flea; everybody knows that it's kind of a *carpe diem* seduction poem. So what am I going to do with it that's different? That's the problem.

Reggie then advanced a complex interpretation of "The Flea" as a self-reflexive poem about writing in which the poem itself, rather than a flea, constructs the "marriage" between the speaker and listener. But the turn at the conclusion of the poem, in which the speaker dismisses the significance of the "marriage" in the flea, contradicted Reggie's developing interpretation:

> **Reggie:** Well, obviously my image from above drops out here because he's going to tweak this and flip it to the positive so that the killing of the flea is no longer a problem, but as an example that sleeping with him is not going to hurt her. So, my problem is . . . . What do I do with the final stanza?

After attempting for several minutes to account for the final stanza, Reggie decided that his interpretation would not meet disciplinary standards of textual support, and so he never advanced to argument planning.

> **Reggie:** *Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me, / Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.* That's the problem: it still implies the absence of a poem at the end. That last paragraph is a problem. I will have to fiddle with it more. I still think I can run with the self-reflexive poem, as poem about poem, but right now that won't stand up at MLA.

For scholars in this study, then, the search for "reality" beneath the "appearance" of a standard reading was a fundamental, exploratory reading strategy that often led nowhere.

Paradigm

The *paradigm* topos appeared in 22% of protocol words and was used by 8 of 9 participants, which made it the second-most common topos. Nancy responded to the male/female tête-à-tête in "Conversation Galante" by applying a feminist reading:

> **Nancy:** With "Conversation Galante" I think my temptation would be to read it from a feminist point of view, maybe try to figure out just how Eliot is taking the speaker, who is and isn't him, and the lady--whether in fact it is a misogynist poem or whether he's mocking the misogyny of the speaker.

In argument sections of the protocols, the paradigm topos (36%) appeared just as frequently as *appearance/reality* (36%). About three-fourths of all *appearance/reality* comments appeared in interpretation sections, but over half of all *paradigm* comments appeared in argument sections, which means participants applied the *paradigm* topos during a later stage of reading. In other words, whereas these scholars applied the *appearance/reality* topos to turn up deeper meanings that might be developed into

arguments, the application of a *paradigm* often *was itself* a suitable argument. For example, Jen initially read "May Morning" through the lens of the *appearance/reality* topos in the hopes of unearthing deeper meanings. Long after this strategy proved fruitless, and during her argument planning stage, she decided that she could construct an argument from a New Historicist reading:

> **Jen:** Maybe something biographical in this case would open it up. May is associated with Mary, but he is a Protestant. Still, the May/Mary connection could open up a New Historicist reading about where Mary goes after Protestantism. Maybe I could argue that this whole literature, maybe culture, of May Day as Mary's day is getting secularized by Milton's time.

After an initial reading of "God's Grandeur" in which he voiced desultory impressions, Reggie decided he could organize an argument from an ecocritical reading of the poem:

> **Reggie:** That would work well as an environmentalist poem. My problem is I don't know what the standard reading of this poem is, but I think that I'll attempt—unless it's a complete cliché—to read it as an environmentalist poem, early environmentalist poem.

It should be noted that the call for papers ("Papers exploring the lyric as represented by Donne's 'The Flea,' Milton's 'Song: On May Morning,' Hopkins' 'God's Grandeur,' and Eliot's 'Conversation Galante'") almost demanded that participants read the four poems as paradigmatic of the lyric genre, and so the number of *paradigm* comments may be artificially high. For example, Stan used the four poems to make an

argument about lyric personae in general:

> **Stan:** I think what I'll do is focus on persona as one dimension—by no means the only dimension—of these four that is illustrative of the lyric, or the lyric in literary studies. Language, imagery would absolutely be a viable kind of focus, but maybe language or imagery would be a little harder to make coherent relative to persona. I think I could indeed establish a paper or even, I suppose, a potential publication on that issue.

Tony hesitated to make generalizations based on just four lyrics; still he was inclined to see them as illustrative of the historical development of the genre:

> **Tony:** So I guess if I'm doing a one page abstract, I would talk about the idea that the poem involves the . . . one of the aspects of the lyric poem that we see in these poems is the general speaker whose language is overheard by the reader, the listener, though the listener is at various degrees of remove from that speaker. And there's a kind of historical development in the course of the four poems as you move from the first to the last—not sure it's an even development. That may be because you can't make too many generalizations on the basis of these four texts.

And in an even broader application, Eric uses the randomness of the four poems to make an argument about the nature of literature:

> **Eric:** What I'll say is literature builds on literature. I mean you read these four poems, just pick them up like this, and if you're properly taught, educated, trained, you begin to see all kinds—immediately my thought is

to take these four poems and see how do they relate to each other. It's interesting as you read poems, the way in which one poem leads to another poem, and you learn literature begets literature.

Paradox

The *paradox* topos appeared in 7% of protocol words and was employed by 7 of 9 participants. In Tony's comparison of Donne and Eliot's female addressees, he points out that, paradoxically, the woman in "Conversation Galante" is given words that are composed by a male poet:

> **Tony:** The speaker has a relationship with, like Donne's speaker, a real woman, here more real than Donne's in the sense that she has words that Donne's addressee does not. Though since the speaker is writing the poem, of course, in a sense he's giving her the words—kind of a conundrum.

Nancy could not determine whether Hopkins intended the images "flame out" and "ooze of oil crushed" to be positive or negative, so she speculated that they reflect God's simultaneous presence and absence in the poem:

> **Nancy:** *It will flame out*. "Flame out" has two senses: expanding the light, but also burning out. [Later] *Gathers to a greatness like the ooze of oil crushed*. What is he talking about? Maybe it's sort of like the doubleness of the flame. Is it spreading, or is it going out? Likewise, does the greatness gather and expand, or is it put out? Well, that's sort of the issue of the poem: has God disappeared or not? There is an apparent

disappearance, as well as a comeback. Maybe these are mutually exclusive readings that we don't have to recuperate.

In his interpretation of "Conversation Galante," Albert detected a male speaker who remains sentimental even as he rebukes sentimentality, which is the situation of all Eliot's poems influenced by Laforgue:

> **Albert:** The speaker in the first stanza seems to both want to be but not want to be sentimental. He wants to be it but then ironize it simultaneously, so "our sentimental friend the moon" kind of displaces the sentiment that maybe he would be looking to have himself.

The *paradox* topos comprised a slightly higher percentage of argument sections (10%) than interpretation sections (6%), but more individual instances appeared in passing, during interpretation. For example, Tony remarked that Donne's language both suggests physical intimacy and remains coy about the couple's location, but this off-hand observation did not factor into his argument:

> **Tony:** It's pretty clear they're already . . . or are they? [Moments later] I was going to say they're in bed together, but I don't know that. They don't have to be, actually. It's interesting how the language both suggests sensuality, sensual contact, and so on, and at the same time doesn't necessarily allow you to conclude exactly where they are or what they are doing except insofar as we know there's a flea there.

On the other hand, Stan made paradox central to his argument about the historical progression of lyric speakers. "Conversation Galante" is more complex, according to

Stan, because its speaker is both more palpable and elusive than the speakers in the earlier poems:

> **Stan:** This poem is more clearly set up perhaps than either of the first two in terms of inserting a self-identified "I" figure, a self-identified speaker whose words are literally quoted. The point that I would be making here is that the speaker is here both more transparent and perhaps also more obscure. So without necessarily being able to say precisely or fully what the poem as a whole is about, I think I could say pretty confidently, could pretty confidently make that claim, that the speaker is at once very transparently present and at the same time the nature of that relationship and what we are to understand about the speaker is, I think, purposely left somewhat in doubt.

The nature of the task in my study may have facilitated use of the paradox topos at a higher rate than is typical for the field at large. Lyric was the preferred genre of the New Criticism, an interpretive approach that relied on explication of figures of speech generally and paradox in particular. By asking experienced scholars, some of whom attended graduate school during New Critical prominence, to close read lyrics, the task in my study may have elicited greater attention to figurative language (and consequently to paradox) than is typical of professional work in literary studies as a whole.

Context

Eight of 9 participants used the *context* topos, which appeared in 7% of protocol words. For instance Stan considered the possibility that "Conversation Galante" referred

implicitly to Eliot's troubled marriage:

> **Stan:** I wonder, though I don't know too much about the Eliot marriage relationship, whether this is intended to be some . . . grow out in some ways of the marriage between T.S. Eliot and . . . I think his wife was, was it Vi? Or Viv, I believe, maybe Vivian? The Donne poem is sometimes read slightly biographically. Whether I could do that with the Eliot poem, again, I just don't know.

In a typical combining of the *appearance/reality* and *context* topoi, Tony's interpretation of "The Flea" complicated the "apparent" meaning of the word "blood" by detecting a submerged "reality" in the historical meaning of the word:

> **Tony:** Of course mingling blood is interesting, too, because as I understand Renaissance medicine, seminal fluid—and maybe vaginal fluid, too, I'm not sure about that—was refined blood in some way. So clearly the fact that the flea sucks the blood of the two of them has to do with sexual congress.

Nancy also considered bringing in history to deepen the significance of the image of the Holy Ghost at the end of "God's Grandeur":

> **Nancy:** Perhaps you could argue that it's a woman, especially because now that I think, if I remember correctly, in the Middle Ages there was a tendency to identify the Holy Ghost with Mary. So the idea of the Holy Ghost brooding over the world with warm breast like a mother hen with her chicks or something would kind of work there.

The *context* topos was distributed more evenly between interpretation and argument segments than any other topos, although its frequency in argument segments was made artificially low because participants did not have immediate access to the secondary materials necessary for a contextual argument. Several participants stated they would use contextual information eventually, and Eric even ended his think-aloud session at the point when he felt he could not proceed without background reading:

> **Eric:** I think that's about it for a first reading of these. Now I'll start beginning to look at them in ways that connect them with history, connect them with their context, connect them with their own lives.

Similarly, Gayl planned to shore up her knowledge of the poets' lives before developing her argument at length:

> **Gayl:** If these are poems I'm going to be working with, eventually I'll have a lot more context to work with. I'll have probably even a certain amount of biography to bring to the poems. And that's not to say I read the biography into the poems, but that helps me to kind of be sensitized.

Albert, who, like most, had trouble finding much to say about "May Morning," hoped to construct an argument after some investigation of a single word:

> **Albert:** I want to investigate the meaning of "salute." I think it has a technical meaning in 16th Century language and is a poetic form in itself: a salute. I'm not sure of that. I'm not that well read in the 16th Century, but I'll certainly find that out.

Such remarks signal a greater reliance on the *context* topos as arguments develop,

but participants also were eager to consider a text's historical and cultural context early in the reading process. Defying New Critical strictures against "extrinsic" information, Jen did not hesitate to commit the "intentional fallacy" in making sense of the difficult "Conversation Galante":

> **Jen:** Now here I happen to know about Eliot's not entirely positive views of women, and I think of the connection between this and the much more famous "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," where the women come and go talking of Michelangelo, and where the guy is pinned and wriggling on the wall. And I see that as the same date, it's 1917, so I see it in that context.

Participants invoked the context topos, as they did the appearance/reality topos, to generate interpretations that might be developed into arguments, but just as often they considered a poem's historical context to be a truth standard, not open to interpretation, that must be met in order to be historically responsible.

Social Justice

The *social justice* topos appeared in 7% of protocol words and was used by 5 of 9 participants. In Gayl's interpretation of "The Flea," she not only decried the treatment of female addressees in seduction poems, but she also tied this concern to the actual practice of teaching such poems:

> **Gayl:** Maybe I'd talk about the difficulty of teaching this poem. I guess I'm really down on some of these Renaissance guys and their . . . . I mean I just keep thinking about how, in teaching a poem like this—I can't help it, I'm a teacher—I'd have to work with the sexual tension, but I wouldn't

want to beat it to death, and I wouldn't want to be doing it in a co-ed class where I'm upsetting some of my younger female students.

Reggie uses his ecocritical reading of "God's Grandeur" to speak to the current political situation regarding the environment:

> **Reggie:** He doesn't seem to suggest that we not do this. He seems to suggest that we recognize that all of this activity—toiling, soiling, oiling, treading, extracting, crushing—are simply other manifestations of God's grandeur. So I think that I would have to read it as a, perhaps a, at first initially bleak sounding, but finally affirmative, or perhaps naively affirmative, poem in that Hopkins seems to assume that, no matter what man does, nature will continue to replenish itself. So this would be a great poem for the Bush administration to use to justify the destruction of nature everywhere because God will step in and replenish it for us.

Nancy's interpretation of "Conversation Galante" allowed her to say something about the state of feminist literary criticism in general:

> **Nancy:** With "Conversation Galante" I think my temptation would be to read it from a feminist point of view, maybe try to figure out just how Eliot is taking the speaker, who is and isn't him, and the lady--whether in fact it is a misogynist poem or whether he's mocking the misogyny of the speaker, which I think is perfectly possible here. To me the woman has the better of the argument, and I think the poem is constructed to give her that, but I'm not absolutely sure. I suppose feminist criticism shouldn't label

certain poets misogynist and then never revisit them.

The *social justice* topos was more prevalent in argument segments (11%) than interpretation (5%), so these scholars invoked it late in the reading-to-write process. These results are not surprising considering that 64% of *social justice* comments were double-coded as *paradigm* comments, the highest rate of overlap between any two topoi. For instance, in the previous paragraph, Nancy related "Conversation Galante" to current feminist criticism upon applying a feminist paradigm. The *social justice* topos is similar to the *paradigm* topos in that each involves previously constructed concepts applied to the details of individual literary texts.

Ubiquity

The *ubiquity* topos appeared in 5% of protocol words and was invoked by 4 of 9 participants. Since Reggie was "reading against the grain" with his post-Industrial Revolution interpretation of "God's Grandeur," he needed to (and did) find recurring images of petroleum to bolster his case:

> **Reggie:** They didn't have a lot of drilling in England at that time, obviously, but they may have been smashing coal to create petroleum oil. [Later] *And though the last lights off the black West went.* Black, again, I'm getting oil images. *Oh, morning, at the brown brink.* Brown and black. Oil, oil everywhere. [Later] *It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.* I'm getting images of refineries here, refineries on the Texas coast. [Later] Again, images of the world being disrupted so that this stuff comes up and then the stuff being lit on fire, flaming or, in the case of oil wells, flaming

out.

Nancy struggled to understand why, in "God's Grandeur," Hopkins writes, "the soil is bare now." Once she decided the line referred to winter, she began to find seasonal references everywhere in the poem:

> **Nancy:** Image of death . . . Oh! It could be winter! Maybe people are wearing shoes because it's winter—that would explain the brownness. It would also anticipate spring—oh there we go!—in line twelve. So maybe that's it, that there's a seasonal image. Something coming out of winter, a rebirth—oh good, I feel better. The image of winter, yeah, I'm surprised I didn't pick up on that, but it's not really hitting me over the head. *Nature is never spent . . . . the dearest freshness deep down things*. So I'm just kind of running through and finding spring everywhere now that I'm thinking along that line.

All *ubiquity* statements were uttered during interpretation, and none were advanced to argument planning stages. Just as the nature of the task might have facilitated participants' use of the paradox topos, it almost certainly curtailed their use of the ubiquity topos. In order for critics to construct arguments about the ubiquity of images, words, and devices, they must work with texts long enough (or with enough different texts) to yield hidden patterns and repetitions. It seems unlikely that four lyric poems from different poets and time periods would provide critics with sufficient materials to locate concealed patterns.

In sum, the literary scholars in this study applied some of the special topoi earlier

in the reading-to-write process than others, a result that has important implications both for literary scholars who resist disciplinarity (Downing & Sosnoski, 1995; Harkin, 1987; Ohmann, 1996) and for compositionists who suggest that students be given explicit instruction in the discourse conventions of literary studies (Herrington, 1988; MacDonald, 1987, 1989; Wilder, 2002; Wolfe, 2003). Participants' first move upon encountering the poems was to look past literal meanings toward potential significance beneath the surface, suggesting that the *appearance/reality* topos is a basic reading strategy by which these scholars comprehend literature *as literature*. Although the *context* topos was slightly more prevalent during argument planning, participants also applied this topos early, drawing on their vast contextual knowledge during initial processing of the poems. Finally, participants tended to remark on the formal topoi of *paradox* and *ubiquity* during first readings. Although participants rarely incorporated the *paradox* and *ubiquity* topoi into their arguments, their sensitivity to such textual curiosities seemed fundamental to their processing of poetry. When it comes to such automatic operations, calls for literary study to transcend disciplinarity may be nearly impossible to heed. In terms of teaching, scholars' application of these topoi appears to be so automatized that providing students explicit instruction in their use would involve a high degree of abstraction, and it might be difficult to teach them how to apply these topoi in a non-reductive way. In fact, Wolfe taught the topoi explicitly in an introductory literature course, and she found that undergraduates' applications of the *appearance/reality* and *paradox* topoi tended to be overly facile.

The *paradigm*, *context,* and *social justice* topoi appeared more frequently during

later processing as participants planned their MLA arguments. Participants applied the *paradigm* topos (and to some extent its subvariant, *context*) primarily as a deliberate composing strategy, a way of producing "a reading" for their written arguments. The *social justice* topos, because it overlapped so frequently with the *paradigm* topos, appeared primarily during argument planning, but even when participants applied the *social justice* topos independently of a paradigm, they did so usually as part of their arguments. They often reflected on how a *completed* interpretation might be related to current social and political issues, but rarely did they express such thoughts *during* the act of initial processing. The *mistaken critic* topos was virtually absent from the protocols, but in follow-up interviews participants indicated that they use this topos late in the composing process as an exigence-producing maneuver. These topoi may be more avoidable for those seeking to break disciplinary patterns and more transferable for those looking to introduce students to disciplinary discourse. In the only two published studies of attempts to teach the topoi explicitly, both Wolfe (2003) and Wilder (2003) found that students were most successful in producing paradigmatic readings of texts, lending support to the idea that (seemingly) less ingrained topoi are more transferable.

Knowledge-Building Processes

Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and Wilder (2005) related some of the special topoi to knowledge building (or the lack thereof) in literary studies. In this section I discuss whether participants used topoi in the knowledge-building manner described by Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and Wilder (2005). In general, I found that these scholars applied the *appearance/reality* and *context* topoi in a manner consistent with knowledge

building, whereas their use of the *paradigm* topos is better described as epideictic.

Appearance/reality

Participants' consistent search for *appearance/reality* distinctions supports Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and Wilder's (2005) contention that this topos is one of the fundamental assumptions of literary criticism. Participants' behavior did not, however, support Fahnestock and Secor's claims that (1) the search itself matters most in literary argument and (2) arguments that grow out of the search for deeper meanings may seem flawed by objective standards. Fahnestock and Secor found some of the arguments in their sample unconvincing, which led them to conclude that scholars sometimes manufacture complexity in literary texts and exploit the unfalsifiability of literary interpretation. But since Fahnestock and Secor could not observe the processes by which scholars in their sample arrived at their arguments, they could not determine whether those critics were "playing tennis without a net" or were simply unskilled players. For participants in my study, the question of whether an argument could be supported by textual and contextual evidence was of primary importance. For instance, David, who writes on lesbian and gay studies and queer theory, hoped to find homoerotic sublimation in "God's Grandeur" and searched for it repeatedly, but ultimately he decided that the poem simply did not support such a reading:

> **David:** I would really like to find some of Hopkins' homoeroticism in this poem . . . . I just can't find it . . . . I'll have to leave that and move on to the next poem. Maybe Eliot will give me an idea of what to do with Hopkins.

Several participants assumed that the Puritanical Milton must have loaded "May Morning" with theological undertones, but all changed their minds after careful consideration of the poem. Jen, for example, approached the poem convinced that its theme was not as innocent as it appeared:

> **Jen:** Well, it's Milton, so it's got to be more than the morning star. The word "blessing" suggests something religious. I wonder if Christ is the morning star . . . . So if Christ is the morning star . . . . Now this could just be a nature poem, but Milton didn't write many poems like that.

After several minutes of searching for deeper religious themes, Jen was forced to recognize that the surface level of the poem provided the best reading:

> **Jen:** If one read it completely naturally . . . . maybe it is just something about the return of spring. So despite the fact that this is Milton and I would expect there to be religion lurking behind it, I'm thinking that perhaps there isn't.

In Fahnestock and Secor's defense, it may be impossible to identify the implicit standards by which literary scholars distinguish "found" textual realities from "constructed" ones. For example, in Wilder's (2002) ethnography of a sophomore literature course, the professor attempted to prevent students from applying the *appearance/reality* topos by "outlawing" the words *symbol* and *theme*, which, he stated in class, "teach that you don't have to read what's there" (p. 185). He went on to invoke this topos regularly, however, leading one frustrated student to exclaim, "Didn't he say not to look into it and then he looks into it?" (p. 187) Still, just because standards of textual

evidence remain implicit (and may exclude "outsiders"), this does not mean that those standards do not exist. All participants in my study constantly monitored their interpretations according to evidentiary standards and abandoned without hesitation those interpretations that fell short. And though they expressed a preference for complexity (most disliked Milton's "Song: On May Morning" because of its simplicity), they did not manufacture it (participants either excluded "May Morning" from their abstracts or used it as a foil for the more complex poems).

Paradigm

I found no evidence to support Wilder's (2005) suggestion that use of the *paradigm* topos indicates a shift in literary studies toward a more scientific model of knowledge building. Because Wilder found numerous instances in which a conceptual template was used to read literary texts, she speculated that literary studies may be operating more like a scientific field: a community of scholars attempting to explain individual texts with general theories and refining those theories based on evidence from individual texts. When participants in my study applied a general theory to the poems, however, they did so not to *explain* the poems but to *complicate* them: to further highlight their uniqueness and particularity. For example, in Jen's application of the *paradigm* topos already discussed, she decided on a New Historicist reading of "May Morning" not so much to provide answers, but, in her words, "to open it up." Nancy proceeded cautiously with her feminist reading of "Conversation Galante" because she worried about "putting this poem in a straightjacket." Reggie did not believe an ecocritical reading of "God's Grandeur" best explained it; rather, he wanted "to read against the

standard" to further illustrate the "amazing applicability" of the poem. Results may have been skewed by the nature of the task in my study. Because they were asked to examine four specific poems, participants in my study may have been more inclined to explore the poems' uniqueness. Still, their purpose in applying theories was different from that of scientists: whereas scientists ostensibly formulate theories to explain relationships or underlying principles of observed phenomena, these professors applied theories to demonstrate how the poems were different from all others, to highlight particularities that may have been unrecognized by other modes of reading.

Context

Wilder (2005) supplemented the *paradigm* topos with a subvariant, *context*, and argued that critics who used the new topos differed from those in Fahnestock and Secor's (1991) sample by eschewing isolated interpretations and constructed (as opposed to found) textual realities. Instead, those who applied the *context* topos applied objective truth standards to their interpretations and related their claims to consensual knowledge. The prevalence of the *context* topos in the protocols supports Wilder's claims, and just like the writers in Wilder's sample, participants in my study considered a poem's historical context to be a truth standard, not open to interpretation, that must be met in order to be historically responsible. After Reggie developed his ecocritical reading of "God's Grandeur," for example, he acknowledged that eventually his argument would require extensive historical research:

> **Reggie:** The Hopkins, I'm just interested there for historical context because I have started getting on the whole petroleum, coal, crushing

> thing. 1877 seems early for that, but maybe not. Maybe . . . I'll just have to look at the history.

All but one participant invoked the context topos, and participants consistently qualified their interpretations by making them contingent upon contextual information.

Mistaken Critic in Follow-Up Interviews

Wilder also supplemented the *appearance/reality* topos with a subvariant, *mistaken critic*. Although the *mistaken critic* topos was virtually nonexistent in the protocol data, in interviews participants discussed this topos in some detail. I want to address it briefly here, supplementing the protocols with interviews, because of its clear relation to knowledge building.

None of the 9 participants mentioned the work of specific colleagues while thinking aloud, which differs from previous studies of evolutionary biologists (Charney, 1993) and social scientists (Wyatt, et al., 1993). The absence of the *mistaken critic* topos in the protocols, combined with its frequent occurrence in the articles in Wilder's (2005) sample, suggests that literary scholars may consider the critical discourse surrounding a text only after their own interpretations and ideas for arguments have taken shape. Such a practice would call into question Wilder's claim that scholars *first* consider a body of knowledge and *then* make claims against it (p. 102). Follow-up interviews with participants, in fact, confirmed that they consult the field's consensual knowledge relatively late in the process of constructing an argument. For example, Gayl consults secondary sources late in her inventional process because she fears that reading the professional literature at an early stage might dampen the originality of her

interpretations:

> **Gayl:** I totally begin with my own interest. My process is more about making interconnections and letting things happen. I just let things happen very naturally. I've always been one of those people who believe you kind of wake up with your idea. My theory comes from me. I certainly would feel irresponsible and like I was wasting my time if I started to reinvent the wheel with every one of the subjects I take up, so I do scour the MLA bibliography at some point. But I also kind of guard my own response so that I'm not too colored by what others say.

The desire to preserve the originality of one's reading may be one reason literary critics delay review of the professional literature, but another, more pragmatic reason is that this step simply is unnecessary in the beginning stages of a literary inquiry. According to Albert, legitimate scholarly work can begin as the careful reading of primary texts:

> **Albert:** You look at the language and see where the language takes you. And see if you can see something in the language that maybe is new. Usually I think of publishing something because I've gotten interested in it, and I've thought about it a lot, and I've begun to have ideas about it, and I say, "why not write about it."

Such observation and reflection would be insufficient in "hard" sciences such as physics where, according to Bazerman (1985), researchers must monitor journals closely in order to continue their own work and generate new inquiries (p. 6). One of the scholars in my

study begins his inquiries with the close reading of primary texts because he thinks of literature as entirely separate from the scholarly discourse surrounding it:

> **Eric:** Well maybe with me it's fools rush in; maybe I'm overconfident; but I feel if you know literature you know literature. I've always said to students: "Learn how to read Joyce and you'll know how to read. Then you can read anything." I feel that way about poems.

The physicists in Bazerman's study, by contrast, "find it hard to disentangle nature from the impression created by the literature" (p. 19), and "their view of nature is directed toward making more statements about nature . . . based on schema arising from previous statements" (p. 19). Finally, some scholars in my study find it unnecessary to consult scholarly discourse early in the composing process simply because their sub-fields move so slowly. Stan, for example, believes he can begin a project on Milton without reading journals regularly because, as he stated: "I'm familiar with Milton scholarship generally. I know how that works. I mean it's not like the issues have changed much." This contrasts sharply with the physicists in Bazerman's study, who must consult the professional literature weekly to keep pace with their fields (p. 7).

All 9 participants did stress the importance of reviewing the literature eventually, and so Wilder (2005) may be correct in suggesting that the field has strengthened its knowledge-building practices. One might argue that so long as a literary argument is situated in the field's ongoing work by the time it is published, then it serves a knowledge-building function, even if it did not *begin* as a response to a gap in the scholarly conversation. Tony's description of his process demonstrates how literary

inquiry can begin independently of the scholarly discourse and yet end as socially negotiated knowledge building:

> **Tony:** In my case, sometimes there's a problem in a text, or an aspect of the text that seems ill-understood, and I come up with some way of understanding it. You get struck by something, and sometimes it turns out everybody else has been, too, and they've written about it quite well. Sometimes it turns out people haven't seen it that way. You have solved a problem, which it turns out everyone else has talked around.

Literary scholars would be forced to change their practices if they found that too often the problems that interest them had been "written about quite well," but as it stands, they seem to have adapted to the movement of their fields, just as Bazerman's (1985) physicists have theirs. The discipline of literary studies appears to be "rural," according to the definition of Becher and Trowler (2001), which means that the space of inquiry is so vast that it is unlikely two scholars will settle on the same spot (p. 105).

Conclusion

The picture of scholarly writing that emerges from this study is a hybrid of epideictic argument and communal knowledge building. As literary scholars read poetry and planned arguments for colleagues, they searched for hidden, implicit, deep meanings, which indicates the enduring primacy of the *appearance/reality* topos. They did not apply this topos at all costs, however; unlike the critics in Fahnestock and Secor's (1991) sample, these professors seemed unwilling to forward an interpretation unless it could be supported with ample textual and contextual evidence. They behaved more like the critics

in Wilder's (2005) sample by attempting to find, rather than construct, textual realities (p. 104). Although the professors in this study did not cite the work of other critics while thinking aloud, in follow-up interviews they all mentioned the importance of "consulting the literature," an important aspect of communal knowledge building. On the other hand, the reading-to-write processes of these professors suggest that some of the textual features Wilder (2005) observed function simply as audience appeals, or exigence-producing moves, that may not reflect a genuine commitment to knowledge building. Participants applied theories not so much to explain the explain the poems but to complicate them, to avoid reductive explanations. To be sure, they wanted their interpretations to resolve issues in the poems, so perhaps the best way to characterize their use of theories is as the "tightrope walk" Wilder describes: an attempt to draw conclusions about literary texts while preserving the irreducibility of those texts (p. 106). Although in follow-up interviews participants did confirm the importance of situating their claims in the professional conversation, they described the function of "the literature" in starkly different terms from scientists (Bazerman, 1985). Rather than allowing the professional discourse to direct their research, these scholars said they jealously guard the originality of their enquiries, only later considering how their results might fit into the body of existing knowledge.

Process research always sacrifices in breadth what it gains in depth, so more think aloud studies of literary professionals are needed before we can generalize about their reading and writing processes. Participants' responses to the preliminary survey ensured that they read poems related to their professional writing and with which they were

familiar, and in follow-up interviews participants indicated that the task did reflect disciplinary activities. Still, the task was highly artificial, asking participants to read literary works of a particular type (the lyric poem), not emergent from their own interests, without access to contextual information, under timed conditions. Future research should study the reading and writing processes of literary scholars in more naturalistic settings. Future studies might also address the possibility that some topoi are more applicable to certain genres of literature and more prevalent in certain subfields of literary study. The tightly constructed, verbally complex lyric poems in this study seemed to encourage New Critical procedures, and consequently the *paradox* topos may have been overrepresented. Conversely, the poems' brevity and random grouping seemed to prevent widespread use of the *ubiquity* topos. Finally, the fact that only 30% of interpretation and argument comments could be coded according to the special topoi scheme may indicate the presence of other topoi at work in published articles. The processes by which literary professionals move from the reading of primary works of literature to secondary studies of literature remains mysterious, and surely identifiable features of the discourse of literary studies remain undiscovered.

CHAPTER FIVE:

"Generic" and "Specific" Expertise in English: An Expert/Expert Study in Poetry Interpretation and Academic Argument

English professors, it seems, have always worried that scholarship in their field would become so specialized as to threaten the shared knowledge that binds their discipline. In 1938, John Crowe Ransom criticized literature professors who were content "watering their own gardens; elucidating the literary histories of their respective periods" (p. 337). Ask one of these professors to judge a work outside his period, Ransom observed, and "it is very rare that he finds anything particular to say" (p. 336). Nearly 30 years later, Richard Ohmann argued that the proliferation of subfields in English was destroying the field's sense of community, allowing one to "imagine a time when each literary scholar knows only his *own* research" (1967, p. 11). And nearly 40 years after *that*, Barry Sarchett claimed that English was a field "with no clearly discernible structure or center" that has become "so fragmented as to virtually disappear" (2003, p. 45). Not all English professors have always fretted over the fragmentation of English (those with postmodern sympathies often *celebrate* the field's eclecticism and lack of structure), but the *existence* of severe fragmentation, and subsequently the lack of a disciplinary core, has been asserted ever since English became a research field (cf. Graff, 1987).

Yet recent studies of academic expertise suggest that disciplinary experts possess "generic expertise" (Patel & Groen, 1991), the ability to represent field-specific problems accurately and efficiently, regardless of whether they are working in their area of

specialization (Leinhardt & Young, 1996; Roth & Bowen, 2003; Wineburg, 1994, 1998). It is generic expertise that distinguishes disciplinary experts from nonexperts, for even in studies where novices and intermediates possessed more knowledge of a particular subject matter than experts did, only experts demonstrated generic expertise (Graves & Frederikson, 1991; Schoenfeld, 1985; Wineburg, 1991).

Is there such a thing as generic expertise in English? Or is this discipline so "diffuse" (Toulmin, 1972) as to lack a common protocol for defining and solving disciplinary problems? The aim of this study was to investigate whether disciplinary experts in English demonstrate generic expertise when they read and write about literary texts that are both familiar to them and unfamiliar, inside their area of specialization and outside it. Eight English Department faculty members used a think-aloud procedure to read four lyric poems and compose a short text proposing a hypothetical conference talk about them for a Modern Language Association (MLA) meeting. To my knowledge, this is the first study of expert reading in English using a crossed-design: participants were divided into two groups of 4 according to their area of specialization, and each group read texts in both areas.

Generic and Specific Expertise

Patel and Groen (1991) expanded the expert/novice framework so as to better describe fields, such as academic disciplines, that encompass gradations of expertise and an array of sub-fields. So, for example, in a field like English, we might use the term "novice" to describe an undergraduate in an introductory literature course, "intermediate" to describe a graduate student in English, and "expert" to describe an English professor.

But the category of "expert" must be expanded to describe differences between professors working within their area of specialization and those working without. There is, after all, no sense in which literary scholars who specialize in 17th century poetry are more expert in English than scholars who specialize in modernist poetry, but we might expect the former group to do more with a poem by John Milton than the latter. At the same time, it seems misleading to describe modernist scholars as "novices" or "intermediates" when they encounter a poem by Milton. Thus, Patel and Groen use the term "subexpert" to describe someone who has reached the highest level of expertise in a field but is working in an unfamiliar domain. Subexperts demonstrate *only* generic expertise because, although they represent problems accurately and efficiently, they lack the necessary domain knowledge to *solve* these problems with apparent ease. Patel and Groen describe an "expert" as someone who has reached the highest level of expertise in a field and is working in a familiar domain. Experts demonstrate *both* generic expertise *and* "specific expertise" because they possess the domain knowledge necessary to solve field-specific problems.

The subexpert/expert division is useful because the performance of field experts working outside their area of specialization differs significantly from the performance of novices or even intermediates. In the field of medicine, according to Patel and Groen (1991), the key characteristic of generic expertise, that which distinguishes experts from intermediates, is "knowledge of what not to do" (p. 121). Although medical experts may be stymied by a problem outside their area of specialization, they are able to represent the problem accurately, filter out irrelevant information, and avoid proceeding down faulty

paths. Intermediates, on the other hand, may possess sufficient domain knowledge, but they tend to access irrelevant parts of it and engage in behavior that distracts them from efficient problem solving. Expert historians also demonstrate "knowledge of what not to do" when working outside their area of specialization. In a think-aloud study of university historians reading in unfamiliar domains, Leinhardt & Young's (1996) participants voiced *what* they needed to know in order to interpret an historical document according to professional standards, and they also recognized *when* they did not possess such knowledge (p. 465). In Wineburg's (1998) think-aloud study of university historians, participants monitored the limits of their knowledge often enough to warrant a separate coding category: "specification of ignorance."

But it remains an open question whether the field of English, more conceptually diffuse than medicine or even history, has sufficiently agreed-upon standards of what *constitutes* knowledge and ignorance to allow for the development of generic expertise. Rhetoricians Fahnestock and Secor (1991), in fact, studied scholarly articles in English and concluded that literary scholars need "not distinguish between finding and constructing a reality, or worry over the possible difference" (p. 85). If experts in English really do construct, rather than find, textual realities, then the specification of ignorance so central to generic expertise in other fields may not be as prominent in the think-aloud transcripts of English professors.

Expert Poetry Reading

A number of think-aloud studies have investigated the ways college and pre-college students read poetry (Dias, 1986; Eva-Wood, 2004a, 2004b; Harker, 1994;

Hoffstaedter, 1987; Knapp, 2002; Shimron, 1980; Svensson, 1987; Viehoff, 1986). Taken together, these studies paint a vivid picture of how students first read poetry as odd-looking prose before learning over time to apply the reading conventions that are foundational to expert poetry reading. Knowledge of these conventions is what separates "beginners" from "laypersons," according to Patel and Groen's (1991) framework. The least skilled chess player in the world is still a beginner because he knows the rules of chess, whereas a layperson lacks even this prerequisite knowledge. Similarly, schoolchildren who read poetry in exactly the same way as prose are laypersons, whereas students who at least know the "rules" of poetry reading are beginners.

The picture of expert poetry reading is more obscure, as only three think-aloud studies (Earthman, 1992; Kintgen, 1983; Peskin, 1998) report on the performance of English postgraduates. These studies demonstrate that English graduate students are adept (much more so than beginners or novices) at applying the reading conventions that reader-response literary theorists (Culler, 1975; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) have identified as essential to poetry reading. Kintgen and Peskin found that all their graduate student participants read poems in the way Culler's theory predicts, as unified wholes that rely on coherent metaphors and express a significant attitude toward the world. Earthman's graduate students engaged in the "gap-filling" that, according to Iser, literary reading requires, and they also kept open the multiple perspectives that, according to Iser and Rosenblatt, are available in literary works. Does the performance of these graduate students qualify as generic expertise? There is reason to think so. First, the graduate students in all three studies shared common, discipline-specific conceptual schemes for

problem solving. Second, all monitored *what* their interpretations should accomplish and *when* their interpretations were falling short. Then again, none of the participants in Earthman (1992), Kintgen (1983), or Peskin's (1998) studies expressed concern about their lack of domain knowledge, despite the fact that they read unfamiliar poems that were outside their area of specialization. They struggled with their interpretations from time to time, but they attributed these struggles to the poems' complexity and ambiguity rather than to their own lack of relevant knowledge. These results may indicate that expert performance in English does not require the same level of domain knowledge as other fields. If so, conditions necessary for generic expertise to emerge may not exist in English. On the other hand, perhaps English graduate students are intermediates, rather than experts, and, just like Patel and Groen's (1991) medical students, have not yet acquired "knowledge of what they need to know." A third possibility is that the task of interpreting unknown poems for no specific purpose is too far removed from an authentic professional context to prompt the activation of generic expertise. To discover which of these three explanations is most likely, we must investigate those who have reached the highest level of expertise in English as they perform authentic disciplinary tasks.

Method

Study Design

The results of the poetry familiarity survey (cf. Chapter 2) were used to construct a crossed-design in which all 8 participants read a poem in each of the following four conditions: (1) familiar to him/her and close to his/her professional writing, (2) familiar to him/her but far from his/her professional writing, (3) unfamiliar to him/her but close to

his/her professional writing, (4) and unfamiliar to him/her and far from his/her professional writing. Table 5.1 lists the two groups of 4 participants (categorized according to their area of scholarly expertise) and the poems they read in each condition.

Table 5.1
The 4 Poems and the Conditions They Met for Both Groups of Participants.

	Renaissance Group	**Late Victorian/ Early Modernism Group**
Familiar and Close to professional writing	Donne's "The Flea"	Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"
Unfamiliar and close to professional writing	Milton's "Song: On May Morning"	Eliot's "Conversation Galante"
Familiar and far from professional writing	Hopkins' "God's Grandeur"	Donne's "The Flea"
Unfamiliar and far from professional writing	Eliot's "Conversation Galante"	Milton's "Song: On May Morning"

Scoring of the Think-Aloud Protocols

The verbal protocols were transcribed, and the transcripts were coded on a word-by-word basis using a scheme developed both inductively and deductively. Four categories (rereading, comprehension, evaluation, metacomment) were drawn from Charney (1993) and reflect general reading processes. Two other categories (interpretation, argument) were developed by me from an initial examination of the protocols and reflect reading-to-write processes elicited by the call for papers. We might think of literary argument as "defended interpretation," so differences between interpretation and argument comments were largely contextual. Comments were coded as interpretation if participants uttered them in the context of first working out the purport and significance of the poems. Comments were coded as argument if participants uttered them in the context of planning their MLA talks. Figure 5.1 provides definitions and examples. An independent rater scored 50% of the data, and interrater agreement was 89%.

Figure 5.1
Coding Scheme.

Reading Processes

- **Rereading:** A verbatim repetition of text already read.

- **Comprehension:** Problem-solving episode to figure out the literal meaning of the text.
    - "nocturne is a night song, right? I think so"

- **Evaluation:** An explicit evaluation of the text.
    - "not really one of Milton's best"

- **Metacomment:** Comment on the reader's habitual behavior or current reading strategy.
    - "I'm going to read these in chronological order"

Reading-to-Write Processes

- **Interpretation:** Included comments that:

    - clarified ambiguous, difficult, or figurative passages.
        - "moon imagery suggesting sentimentality"
        - "the 'morning star,' of course, is Venus"

    - described the text's literary features.
        - "we're kind of in the landscape of synesthesia,"
        - "alliteration in 'grandeur of God'"

    - analyzed the text's artistic effects.
        - "repetition of 'trod' makes us trod as we read it"
        - "word inversion, forcing closer reading"

    - unpacked greater significance buried in the text.
        - "ultimately the poem itself is a manifestation of God's grandeur,"
        - "incipient themes that get picked up again in *Paradise Lost*"

- **Argument:** Comment related to planning or composing in response to the prompt.
    - "my argument can't really account for that line,"
    - "for my abstract I'll frame a conversation between these two poems"

Results

Number and Type of Words Uttered

Participants uttered an average of 4120 words during their think-aloud sessions. As can be seen in Table 5.2, the overwhelming majority of these words (81%) were uttered during interpretation and argument planning. Two poems ("The Flea," "God's Grandeur") were highly familiar to participants, and another ("Song: On May Morning") is simple and straightforward. Consequently, participants spent little time engaged in general reading processes and instead went to work quickly on the task described in the call for papers. My analysis will be limited to interpretation and argument comments because, in addition to comprising the majority of data, these activities are most indicative of literary expertise.

Table 5.2
Type and Mean Number of Words Uttered by Each Participant

Type of Activity	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage
Reading Processes			
Rereading	461.50	301.68	11.2
Metacomment	220.75	154.17	5.4
Comprehension	62.63	105.14	1.5
Evaluation	37.38	49.33	.9
Reading to write processes			
Argument	1393.25	291.99	33.8
Total	4119.88	963.81	

Familiarity and Distance Effects on Interpretation Words

The data were analyzed with a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with familiarity and distance as the within-participant factors. As seen in Table 5.3, participants spoke more words during interpretation of familiar poems than unfamiliar poems, and the difference between means approached significance, $F(1,7) = 3.67$, $MSE = 54270.21$, $p < .10$, 1 = .34. A poem's distance from participants' professional writing made little difference in the number of words spoken during interpretation, and there was no interaction effect between poems' familiarity and distance from professional writing.

Table 5.3

Mean Interpretation Words for Familiar/Unfamiliar, Close/Far Poems

	Familiar		**Unfamiliar**		***Average***	
	M	***SE***	***M***	***SE***	***M***	**SE**
Close to Professional Writing	563.50	84.56	417.38	60.70	**490.44**	**55.83**
Far from Professional Writing	566.50	153.25	397.00	120.67	**481.75**	**107.03**
Average	**565.00**	**86.54**	**407.19**	**66.25**		

Note. $N = 8$.

Interpretation: Familiar Poems

A qualitative analysis was conducted to investigate differences between participants' interpretations of familiar versus unfamiliar poems. Two sources of participants' commentary on familiar poems contributed to longer protocols: (a) knowledge of scholarship on the poems, and (b) prior experience with the poems.

Scholarly knowledge. When participants read the poem that was both familiar to them and close to their professional writing, they used their knowledge of the poem's scholarship to elaborate their interpretations. For instance, Stan's knowledge of a scholarly controversy surrounding "The Flea" prompted him to speak for some time about a detail that most readers, including scholars of other periods, would never notice:

> **Stan:** There's been some interesting and rather provocative commentary about the typographical appearance of *sucked* and *sucks* when printed with the so-called long "f"—long "s," rather. Obviously can look like "fucked" or "fucks," and so that's a more provocative dimension of this poem. Poem is very much about sexuality—that's certain. There's controversy about whether the typographical similarity between the two words is Donne's intention or a later invention.

In addition to scholarship specific to poems, participants drew on historical and contextual knowledge of periods to expand their interpretations. Tony used his knowledge of Renaissance discourse to suggest multiple meanings of the word "blood":

> **Tony:** I guess "using" the flea is where the blood . . . blood . . . of course mingling blood is interesting, too, because as I understand Renaissance

> medicine, seminal fluid—and maybe vaginal fluid, too, I'm not sure about that—was refined blood in some way. So clearly the fact that the flea sucks the blood of the two of them has to do with sexual congress.

Also participants applied their knowledge of poets' entire bodies of work. Eric, for instance, extended his interpretation of "God's Grandeur" by reciting verbatim a line from another Hopkins poem:

> **Eric:** This is very much the theme of Hopkins, is it not, the way in which he sees the world, his picture of the world as he looks deeper and deeper, just as he does in that marvelous poem, the other sonnet that he does: "Glory be to God for dappled things, for skies couple-colored as a brind cow."

Prior experience. Participants also drew on prior experience with poems to construct lengthier interpretations. For example, Nancy complicated her current reading of "The Flea" by comparing it to her past readings:

> **Nancy:** *Me it sucked first*. Well, where is that flea sucking? I don't think I've ever really asked myself that. *And now sucks thee*. Yeah, I guess when I was a student I always read that very chastely, like it was an arm or something, but it really doesn't have to be. In fact, fleas typically are way inside. *Our two bloods mingled be*. Yeah, I feel a little bit gratified by this . . . kind of an eroticism that I hadn't fully picked up on.

Prior experience was particularly important when participants read the poem rated familiar/far from professional writing because they lacked extensive scholarly knowledge of the poem. Nancy drew on her childhood experience with "God's Grandeur" to expand her interpretation:

> **Nancy:** I'm certain I read this in high school in Father Renner's English class. It definitely worked well for Catholic school, which is my association here. Hopkins working out his theology.

And Eric found more to say about "The Flea" because he remembered his past impressions of the poem:

> **Eric:** I remember being intrigued by the way in which John Donne brings these remarkably interesting metaphors to bear. This idea of the mingling blood in the flea, where two become one. That conceit sticks with you, so that the mingling is not in a carnal sense—that permanence means it is not shame, it is not sin, it is not a loss of maidenhead.

Interpretation: Unfamiliar Poems

The main reason participants spoke less when interpreting unfamiliar poems is that they lacked scholarly knowledge and prior experience. In addition, participants engaged in 2 behaviors that seemed to cut short their interpretations: (a) specification of ignorance, and (b) early closure of interpretations.

Specification of ignorance. All 8 participants mentioned their unfamiliarity with "Song: On May Morning" and "Conversation Galante," which made them less confident in their interpretations and less willing to put forth the effort required by extended

interpretations. For example, Nancy's hesitation in developing an extended interpretation of "Song: On May Morning" seemed to correlate with her recognition that she had never seen the poem:

> **Nancy:** I don't know this poem. It must be an early one. [Later] I hesitate to read too much into this poem, which actually I do not know and have never read before. I don't really have a lot to say about this. [Later] I'm done with it. Early Milton.

Albert offered some initial impressions of "Conversation Galante," but he expressed much less confidence in his reading of this poem than he did in the familiar poems. Consequently, he seemed less willing to invest his energies in an interpretation that he might later have to abandon:

> **Albert:** She seems to be picking up on his intellectualization of everything. And he's thinking of music as something to body forth his own vacuity. I guess he's intellectualizing the nocturne with which he explains the night and moonshine. That seems a possibility . . . I haven't ever read this poem before so this is all off the top of my head, really. Wouldn't put much stock in it.

Early closure. Whereas participants seemed comfortable with ambiguity (and even sought it out) in the familiar poems, they were much more likely to settle for their initial impressions of the unfamiliar poems. In particular, when participants read the poem that was both unfamiliar and far from their professional writing, they often settled for generalizations. In his interpretation of "Conversation Galante," Tony offered some

generalizations about Eliot before dismissing the poem as a version of the much more famous "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> **Tony:** Ah, well, a bit more puzzling this poem than the others. [Later] Eliot with his usual wide array of allusions to all sorts of esoteric, quasi-esoteric knowledge . . . situation harder to come by. Actually this speaker seems like another J. Alfred Prufrock, always bested by circumstance and overwhelmed and so on.

Similarly, Eric settled for a broad characterization of "Song: On May Morning" as typical Milton:

> **Eric:** Ummm, okay . . . this celebration of the morning and the month of May and the way in which the world seems to move and dance. I guess that is considered Miltonic, what you call Miltonic. Uh, yeah, I can't think of anything more to say about it. It's a nice poem.

Discussion of Interpretation Comments

That participants spoke more when interpreting familiar poems is consistent with the findings of Earthman (1992) and Peskin (1998), which are the only two studies of expert/novice poetry reading in which the expert group comprised English postgraduates. Earthman reported that graduate students' think-aloud transcripts were significantly longer than freshmen's. She attributed this greater length at least partly to graduate students' more "open" readings in which they assumed different perspectives and reveled in ambiguities. Peskin, too, reported that her graduate students produced longer protocols. Graduate students deciphered the plain sense meaning of poems with greater ease, but

"that was only the starting point for them," as they sought "to provide a deeper, richer exploration of the poetic significance" (p. 243). These results also accord with the defamiliarization theory described by Miall and Kuiken (1994), which posits that literary texts complicate, rather than economize, comprehension. Furthermore, the performance of experts in this study was consistent with expert performance more generally. Although experts work more quickly than novices when solving well-defined problems, they tend to work longer on ill-structured problems (Simon, 1973). In particular, experts have been found to work longer on literacy tasks such as composing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1980; 1981) and reading difficult texts (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1991; Wineburg, 1991).

If the English professors in this study read familiar poems in the same way as other expert poetry readers, did they then read unfamiliar poems like novices? At first glance we might think so. Peskin's (1998) description of freshmen "not reattempting alternate readings" and "expressing the need for outside help" (p. 243) applies to the professors in this study when reading unfamiliar poems. Upon closer examination, however, professors here more closely resemble Wineburg's (1998) historian reading outside his domain of expertise. This historian produced about 40% fewer words than his colleague reading inside his domain, but three times as many "specifications of ignorance." For professors in the current study, fewer words correlated with management of their ignorance, as they applied "knowledge of what not to do" (Patel & Groen, 1991, p. 121). In fact, these results may indicate that Peskin and Earthman's (1992) graduate student participants are more accurately categorized as "intermediates," according to

Patel and Groen's scheme. Peskin and Earthman's graduate student participants read unfamiliar poems, and if they had fully mastered the ability to represent field-specific problems, it seems unusual that they would not monitor closely the limitations of their knowledge.

A serious limitation of the current investigation involves characteristics of the two unfamiliar poems. In order to meet the condition of a poem unfamiliar to participants but close to their professional writing, I had to include on the poetry familiarity survey obscure poems by canonical poets. Assuming that literary works become canonical or non-canonical based (at least partly) on their formal merits, it could be that the poems rated familiar in this study are simply more accomplished than those rated unfamiliar, and thus more likely to generate complex interpretations. In fact, both "Song: On May Morning" and "Conversation Galante" are youthful and highly imitative, and neither has been the object of much academic literary analysis. "May Morning," in particular, was dismissed as minor by several participants. In the words of one participant, it is "quite a bad, boring poem."

Familiarity and Distance Effects on Argument Words Uttered

Table 5.4 shows the average number of argument words that participants uttered when reading the poem that was familiar to them/close to their professional writing; familiar/far; unfamiliar/close; and unfamiliar/far. The data were analyzed with a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with familiarity and distance as the within-participant factors. Participants spoke significantly more words when planning arguments about poems far from their professional writing, $F(1,7) = 11.03$, $MSE =$

9675.21 , $p < .05$, 1 = .61. A poem's familiarity did not affect the number of words uttered during argument planning, and there was no significant interaction effect between poems' familiarity and distance from professional writing.

Table 5.4
Mean Argument Words for Familiar/Unfamiliar, Close/Far Poems

	Familiar		**Unfamiliar**		***Average***	
	M	***SE***	***M***	***SE***	***M***	**SE**
Close to Professional Writing	339.00	22.49	242.13	11.08	**290.56**	**13.70**
Far from Professional Writing	394.50	26.05	417.63	76.75	**406.06**	**41.82**
Average	**366.75**	**14.88**	**329.88**	**40.87**		

Note. $N = 8$.

Argument: Poems Close to Professional Writing

A qualitative analysis was conducted to investigate participants' argument planning for poems both near and far from their professional writing. The main reason participants spoke less when planning arguments about poems near their professional writing is that they recognized quickly which aspects of their interpretations were "new." One must know something about the scholarly conversation in order to make an original contribution, so participants felt much more comfortable planning arguments in this condition. Stan, a renowned Donne scholar, knew immediately how his interpretation of "The Flea" would fit into the scholarly conversation:

> **Stan:** I know "The Flea" quite well, so I won't have to worry too much about that one, in terms of what I might say about it. Since I happen to know Donne well and work on Donne, that one should follow pretty quickly.

Along these same lines, Reggie quickly summarized the field's standard reading of "The Flea" before explicitly mining his interpretation for novelty:

> **Reggie:** First of all, a very familiar poem, so all the obvious things would be things that I guess one would not want to say in the session. That's the first thing I'm thinking of: what can I say that's new? Everybody knows the conceit; everybody knows how it works; everybody knows that the bloods mingle inside the flea; everybody knows that it's kind of a *carpe diem* seduction poem. [Later] Want to just put all that to the side and say, "yeah, that's what it is, we all know that."

Finally, as he attempted to make an argument about "God's Grandeur," David clearly had current theoretical discussions of Hopkins' poetry in mind, even though he failed to mention this explicitly.

> **David:** If I'm going to craft an argument, I would really like to find some of Hopkins' homoeroticism in this poem . . . I just can't find it. [Later] Okay, I could look at "God's Grandeur" as a poem of deep sublimation where erotic charge gets put into nature and then displaced on one level to God.

Argument: Poems Far from Professional Writing

Participants worked more deliberately when planning arguments about the poems far from their area of professional writing. Not knowing what had been written about these poems, participants culled their interpretations carefully for insights that *might* be new. For example, Reggie interpreted "God's Grandeur" as a proto-environmentalist poem, but he worried aloud that others had read the poem in this way:

> **Reggie:** My problem is I don't know what the standard reading of this poem is, but I think that I'll attempt—unless it's a complete cliché—to read it as an environmentalist poem, early environmentalist poem.

Reggie then spent several minutes thinking aloud about Hopkins and Victorian England, searching his memory for clues that might help him decide whether to develop his interpretation into an argument. Stan considered a comparison between Donne and Eliot, but he lacked sufficient background knowledge of Eliot scholarship. Similar to Reggie's approach to Hopkins, Stan expended great effort in an attempt to remember all he could

about Eliot:

> **Stan:** I wonder, though I don't know too much about the Eliot marriage relationship, whether this is intended to be some . . . grow out in some ways of the marriage between T.S. Eliot and . . . I think his wife was, was it Vi? Or Viv, I believe, maybe Vivian? The Donne poem is sometimes read slightly biographically. Whether I could do that with the Eliot poem, again, I just don't know.

Albert remembered a great deal about Donne's life. Because he was unfamiliar with Donne scholarship, however, Albert did not know how "The Flea" related to Donne's history, nor could he determine whether his interpretation was new:

> **Albert:** One might also back up and wonder how we're to take this from Donne's point of view because, after all, he's in holy orders, he's a clergyman, and here he is preaching seduction, a song of seduction. Was this, you know, wild Jack Donne in his youth? Well, that's one construction of it, who later became more serious and started sleeping in a coffin. In this case, this is outside my field, so my guess would be that everything I've said is already known and has been said before probably several times.

Finally, Gayl wanted to make an argument about the simplicity of "May Morning." Because she was unfamiliar with Milton scholarship, however, she vacillated about whether she could trust her judgment:

> **Gayl:** Milton is somebody I have not been as fully exposed to as

> somebody who's an English professor is supposed to be. I never took a Milton class. . . . I know how much, how impressive he is when I hear lines quoted, and I know what the structure of the larger poems imply. . . . Maybe in reading Milton and bringing in the connotations of the larger Milton I could do a good job . . . but I am . . . there aren't images here that I'm particularly struck by.

Several participants struggled so mightily to access sufficient background knowledge that they abandoned the task entirely. Two participants excluded "Song: On May Morning" from their abstracts, 2 excluded "The Flea," and 1 excluded "Conversation Galante." After trying unsuccessfully to produce a reading of "The Flea" that felt original, David conceded that it was pointless:

> **David:** I haven't read Donne since I was an undergraduate, and really I would never dream of opening my mouth on Donne in a public forum. I would feel irresponsible doing it. [Later] I mean I would even feel slightly anxious teaching him to graduate students.

Even more frequently participants stated they could go no further in constructing their arguments until they investigated more background materials. In fact, Eric ended his think-aloud session at the moment he felt he could go no further without consulting other texts:

> **Eric:** I think that's about it for a first reading of these. Now I'll start beginning to look at them in ways that connect them with history, connect them with their context, connect them with their own lives.

Discussion of Argument Comments

As English professors in this study attempted to transform their interpretations into professional arguments, they exhibited behaviors similar to those of history experts and subexperts (Leinhardt & Young, 1996; Wineburg, 1998). When reading historical documents inside their area of professional expertise, historians immediately drew on their background knowledge to construct a context through which they could provide professionally acceptable interpretations. Similarly, when English professors planned arguments about poems near their area of professional writing, they quickly constructed an interpretive context from their knowledge of scholarship related to the poems. When historians lacked sufficient background knowledge about primary documents, they confronted their ignorance immediately and closely monitored it throughout their interpretive processes. When English professors read poems far from their professional writing, they described the gaps in their knowledge and then tried to work around them. Participants in this study did do something not reported in previous studies of historians: they gave up on the task altogether if they could not access sufficient background knowledge. This behavior might be explained by differences in task environments. Leinhardt and Young and Wineburg asked historians to construct an understanding of documents that were authentic objects of study, but they did not ask their participants to construct arguments to be put before colleagues. With this additional constraint, historians may have conceded that they could not complete the task in a manner that would meet disciplinary standards. In fact, Rouet, Favart, Britt, and Perfetti (1997) found that history experts (graduate students in history) were less likely than novices (graduate

students in psychology) to express strong opinions on an historical controversy when completing a reading-to-write task reminiscent of professional writing in history.

Authorial novelty is a requirement of professional writing across disciplines, and the behavior of participants in this study accords with theories of how academics generate originality (e.g., Guetzkow, Lamont, and Mallard, 2004; Kaufer & Geisler, 1989). Participants were asked to construct an argument that would be presented at an academic conference, and all referenced the need to offer a "new" reading of the poems. According to Kaufer and Geisler, in order to achieve novelty writers must first be able to "inventory the stock of consensual knowledge in their target community" and then "*represent* this inventory to themselves" (pp. 289-290). When planning arguments about poems near their area of specialization, professors in this study represented the stock of consensual knowledge quickly and efficiently. Once they ventured outside their area of domain knowledge, however, participants engaged in drawn-out processes reminiscent of a "resourceful and persistent *bricoléur*" (1998, p. 321), as Wineburg calls disciplinary experts working outside their domain. Participants racked their memory for knowledge of the poets or periods, revisited the poems themselves for clues, and struggled to decide which features of their interpretations had the ring of originality.

To "solve" the problem of constructing a professional argument, these English professors used problem solving methods typical of experts across domains. When they possessed sufficient background knowledge, they engaged in "strong" problem-solving methods and "forward" reasoning (Newell & Simon, 1972). In other words, participants worked under strong constraints imposed by the specific problem-solving environment,

and also they worked forward from the information given toward an unknown solution. For example, David was strongly constrained by the task environment because he constructed a type of argument specific to Hopkins scholarship. Also, David could begin with the specific poem, "God's Grandeur," and reason forward about its suppressed homoeroticism because he knew that such an interpretation would make for an acceptable solution. In contrast, when professors lacked sufficient domain knowledge, they engaged in "weak" problem-solving methods and "backward" reasoning (Newell & Simon, 1972). This means they were minimally constrained by the specific task environment, and they reasoned backward from a desired solution to the specific problem. For example, because Stan possessed no knowledge of Eliot scholarship, he was not constrained by methods of argumentation specific to that discourse. Consequently, he engaged in the more general method of considering how a poet's work relates to his or her life. Also, Stan began with a desire to say something new about "Conversation Galante" and then reasoned backward to the poem, trying to determine which aspects of his interpretation might make for a suitable argument. It should be noted that participants engaged in both strong and weak problem solving methods, as well as forward and backward reasoning, during argument planning for *every* poem. Their reading, then, exemplifies the "back-and-forth *process* that goes on between domain knowledge and particular cases" (1991, p. 178), which Scardamalia & Bereiter define as expert reading.

General Discussion and Conclusion

This study produced three newsworthy results. First, literary experts produced longer protocols during interpretation, but shorter protocols during argument planning.

These results are not contradictory. Previous studies (Earthman, 1992; Peskin, 1998) have shown that literary experts produce longer protocols than novices when engaged in the ill-structured task of literary interpretation. During initial argument planning, disciplinary experts produce shorter protocols than subexperts because they build a representation of the field's consensual knowledge quickly and efficiently (Leinhardt & Young, 1996; Wineburg, 1998). Second, the English professors in this study were committed to the construction of new knowledge, and potential knowledge claims were judged according to the field's evidentiary standards. This result contradicts Fahnestock and Secor's (1991) claim that literary critics do not distinguish between found and constructed textual realities, and in the process highlights the value of think-aloud research. Fahnestock and Secor only examined published literary arguments, and because they found many of these arguments unconvincing, they concluded that English lacks the evidentiary standards needed to falsify interpretations. When we examine the *process* of argument construction, however, it appears English professors are just as committed to field-specific standards of argument as are professionals in other disciplines. Third, these English professors used strategies similar to those of physicians (Patel & Groen, 1991) and historians (Leinhardt & Young; Wineburg) to cope with their ignorance. They scoured their memories for relevant knowledge, engaged in weak problem-solving methods and backward reasoning, and, most important, closely monitored the limits of their knowledge. This meant they specified the knowledge they would need to complete the task, recognized this necessary knowledge when they found it, and sometimes conceded that they would *never* access this knowledge under the task constraints.

This investigation, like most think-aloud studies, lacks a sufficient number of participants to produce generalizable findings. Future studies of professionals and preprofessionals in English are needed because, 10 years after Graves (1996) called for more contextualized research into literary expertise, there remains a dearth of studies in which participants complete authentic disciplinary tasks. If the 8 English professors studied here are representative of the field as a whole, however, then we must conclude that English, like other academic disciplines, has its own form of generic expertise. Like experts and subexperts in other disciplines, English professors have a clear schema for representing and solving disciplinary problems. Wineburg (1998) distills professional training in history with the dictum: "identify and resist anachronism" (p. 338). Similarly, rhetoricians Fahnestock and Secor (1991) have identified a fundamental assumption of literary criticism: "meaning is never obvious or simple" (p. 89). Just as Wineburg's subexpert resisted anachronism, even when he lacked sufficient knowledge of the historical period, so these English professors refused to simplify poems (to the point of not working with them at all, in some cases) when they lacked familiarity and background knowledge. Whether English professors lament their field's lack of structure or celebrate its conceptual freedom, the current study sends the message that this discipline may not be so different after all.

CONCLUSION

In my introduction I referenced the MLA 2004 Presidential Forum, which offered some grim assessments of the state of scholarship in the humanities. Barbara Herrnstein Smith worried that faculty members in the sciences believe "scholarship in the humanities consists of idle opinion mongering" (2005, p. 20). Louis Menand, though he wondered whether "one of the things ailing the humanities today is the amount of time humanists spend talking about what ails the humanities" (2005, p. 11), nevertheless added to such talk by claiming that literature professors "have almost completely failed at explaining what they do" (p. 13). And John Guillory echoed Menand by claiming that literature professors "have done a poor job of giving an account of what they do" (2005, p. 37). Guillory went on to suggest that "the survival of scholarship in the humanities depends more than ever on our devising a better way to praise it" (p. 37). Although I set out only to describe scholarship in literary studies, the preceding chapters do offer some new ways to praise it.

Previous writing-in-the-disciplines researchers who have studied scholarly writing in literary studies have not praised it. For example, Fahnestock and Secor (1991) claimed that "literary arguments may seem flawed when viewed from a distance and by a field-independent standard" (p. 84). When interpreting literature, according to Fahnestock and Secor, scholars need "not distinguish between finding and constructing a reality, or worry over the possible difference" (p. 85). The fundamental problem with literary argument, according to Fahnestock and Secor, is that it is epideictic, and thus "devoid of true

exigence" (1988, p. 440). MacDonald (1994) accepted this notion of literary argument as epideictic, and, combined with her own finding that literary scholarship fails to produce codified knowledge, argued that the field might be "an imposter in the academy, garnering resources for the activities of research while offering only a sham version of research" (p. 143). Wilder (2005) offered a much more favorable assessment of literary scholarship, but she did so *only* because her findings suggested that the field is moving away from epideictic and toward the accumulation of codified knowledge promoted by MacDonald.

My conclusions differ from Fahnestock and Secor (1988; 1991) and MacDonald's (1994), and, to a lesser extent, Wilder's (2005). In order for these differences to become clear, however, the category of epideictic argument must be examined more closely. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), epideictic argument (1) addresses no opponents, (2) is not controversial, (3) serves to praise or blame, and (4) leads to no direct practical consequences. By this definition, epideictic seems a poor description of literary arguments, even those Fahnestock and Secor (1988) themselves analyzed. For example, one of the articles in their sample, an interpretation of Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" that appeared in *PMLA*, made the following argument:

> Most critics believe the ending of the Intimations Ode is flawed because of its apparent lack of closure. However, this belief stems from a misunderstanding of what the ode genre meant to Wordsworth. Correcting this misunderstanding makes it apparent that Wordsworth intended the poem's ending to resist closure, and this is in fact the poem's greatest strength rather than a flaw. (my description)

Clearly this argument fails to meet the first three criteria of epideictic outlined above. It challenges an apparent critical consensus, so it addresses opponents. By virtue of challenging a standard reading, the argument must be considered controversial. The argument does praise Wordsworth's poem, but that is not its sole, or even primary, focus; in addition it establishes facts about the ode genre and complicates our own definition of the ode. The fourth characteristic of epideictic, that of leading to no direct practical consequences, indeed may apply to the Wordsworth argument. I will address this point momentarily.

Fahnestock and Secor's (1988) categorization of the Wordsworth argument as epideictic makes sense, but only after they elide its details and rephrase it as simply a celebration of the "Intimations Ode":

> At this point we might again wonder what defense the Intimations Ode needs; indeed it would be hard to name a more canonical poem of the nineteenth century or one more highly valued by Wordsworth scholars, nineteenth-century scholars, or readers of English poetry. Why should readers of *PMLA* need to be convinced that the Intimations Ode is a great poem? (p. 438)

Readers of *PMLA* do *not* need to be convinced that the "Intimations Ode" is a great poem, and if the Wordsworth argument is read as such, rather than as an attempt to change the standard interpretation of the poem, then indeed it meets Fahnestock and Secor's definition of epideictic. After all, an argument claiming that the "Intimations Ode" is a great poem addresses no opponents, is not controversial, and only praises the poem. Rephrasing the argument in this manner hardly seems fair, however, and can be

done just as easily to the scientific arguments analyzed by Fahnestock and Secor. For example, one of the arguments in their sample appeared in *Science* and made the following argument:

> A piece of carved caribou bone found in the Yukon is not as old as previously thought and should be categorized as Holocene rather than Pleistocene. (my description)

Fahnestock and Secor claimed that this argument makes a genuine contribution to knowledge. If, however, we rephrase it as, "accurate dating of early human artefacts is important," then it, too, addresses no opponents, is not controversial, and serves only to praise.

The fourth characteristic of epideictic, that of leading to no direct practical consequences, does apply to the Wordsworth argument, but it applies equally well to an argument about the dating of a caribou bone. In fact, more recent scholarship on epideictic in antiquity suggests that it described *all* knowledge-making arguments. According to Walker (2000), an argument was considered pragmatic *only* if, and when, it was made in front of an audience institutionally empowered to settle the dispute, such as in a legal or political setting. The much broader category of epideictic, on the other hand, included any "discourse that asks its audience to form opinions, or even to revise their existing beliefs and attitudes on a given topic" (p. 9). This definition of epideictic, then, would apply to any argument, regardless of discipline, whose purpose is to establish knowledge.

I have been arguing that Fahnestock and Secor's (1988; 1991) use of the term

epideictic is misleading even for the arguments they studied; my more important point is that the behavior of the professors in my study conflicts with Fahnestock and Secor's description of literary argument. One of the reasons epideictic (as Fahnestock and Secor define it) is inappropriate as academic argument is that the speaker/writer faces "no fear of contradiction" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 51). Fahnestock and Secor suggested that this is the case in literary argument, that literary scholars need "not distinguish between finding and constructing a reality, or worry over the possible difference" (1991, p. 85). But for the professors in my study, the question of whether an argument could be supported by disciplinary standards of textual and contextual evidence was of primary importance. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, participants remained ever mindful of potential opponents as they planned their arguments. They sometimes spent tremendous effort on interpretations, only to abandon them after deciding they would not meet disciplinary standards of evidentiary support. Also, far from making uncontroversial arguments, participants *sought out* controversy as a requirement of scholarly argument. They abandoned arguments that seemed "uninteresting," i.e., unlikely to generate any possible disagreement. Finally, words of praise or blame for the poems were virtually nonexistent in the protocols—less than 1% of total words. These results are supported also by the analysis presented in Chapter 5. Participants closely monitored the limits of their knowledge, and changed their interpretive and argumentative strategies depending on whether they possessed sufficient background knowledge to make a well-supported argument. They spoke significantly more words when planning an argument about the poems far from their area of scholarly writing, as they struggled to frame their

observations in such a way that would seem exigent for colleagues.

My findings tend to accord with those Wilder (2005) produced in her analysis of recent scholarly articles. Similar to the findings I presented in Chapters 4 and 5, Wilder found that contemporary scholars were careful to ground their interpretations in historical and cultural contexts. She concluded that, in comparison with those in Fahnestock and Secor's sample, contemporary scholars "are worrying about the difference between finding and constructing a reality" (p. 104). Participants' frequent application of the *paradigm* topos, which I discussed in Chapter 4, supports Wilder's conclusion that scholars are relying more on this topos than did those in Fahnestock and Secor's (1991) sample. Finally, although participants rarely mentioned the work of colleagues as they completed the reading-to-write task, in follow-up interviews all mentioned the need to consult the scholarly literature before going public with their arguments. Similarly, Wilder found that scholars in her sample cited the work of colleagues frequently, much more so than the scholars in Fahnestock and Secor's study.

Although my *findings* are similar to Wilder's (2005), my *conclusions* differ in two significant ways. As explained in Chapter 4, participants applied interpretive theories, as represented by the *paradigm* topos, purely as an inventional technique that in no way represented an attempt to "explain" the poems or "test" theories. In fact, professors applied paradigms as a way to further complicate the poems, highlight their uniqueness, and draw out more of their particulars. Such use of the paradigm topos was not apparent to Wilder, whose view was limited to finished articles. Thus, she speculated that literary scholars were becoming more like "a community of researchers interested in explaining

texts with previously constructed theories and interested in testing social theories in texts" (p. 94). As evidenced by the interviews in Chapter 4, most professors in this study cultivate their own original readings of texts before consulting the readings of colleagues. This means they review the professional literature at a later point in the composing process than do scientists. Again, because Wilder examined only published articles, she concluded that higher numbers of citations must indicate "a recent shift [among literary scholars] toward the epistemic and socially negotiated practices . . . observed among social scientists" (p. 102).

The preceding chapters suggest that literary studies retains a model of knowledge building that is very different from the sciences. The questions remains, however, whether the field *should* adopt a more scientific model. Fahnestock and Secor (1988; 1991), MacDonald (1994), and Wilder (2003) seem to think so, primarily because Fahnestock and Secor's characterization of literary argument creates an invidious distinction between epideictic and scientific argument. Research universities must produce new knowledge, so Fahnestock and Secor's notion of literary epideictic, with its emphasis on celebrating values already held, seems inappropriate in this context. This is what leads MacDonald to suggest that literary studies may be an "imposter" in the academy, and Wilder to propose that literary argument "push past this epideictic function to produce new knowledge" (p. 145). Fahnestock and Secor, MacDonald, and Wilder imply that literary scholarship must become more scientific, or at least *scientistic*, to justify its place in the research university. This means more historical scholarship, less interpretation, more hard facts, less soft opinion. In a sense these rhetoricians are calling

for literary scholarship to return to its roots in scientistic activities like philology, which characterized English in the early research university (cf. Graff and Ohmann).

Even at the height of New Criticism, literature departments supported historical scholarship (and various other types of literary study, such as structuralism, with scientific aspirations) that produced codified knowledge, but I would argue that a scientific model of knowledge building should never be adopted as the *paradigm* for literary study. Richard Ohmann (1996) has noted that in scientific inquiry particular facts are less important than the general theories that explain them. Referring back to the articles examined by Fahnestock and Secor (1988), the particular caribou bone does not really matter to anthropologists; what matters is the general theory of when North America was inhabited. The goal of scientific argument is to produce better and better theories. The opposite is true in literary studies. Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" can be used to illustrate various linguistic rules, or to illustrate historical forces at work in early 19th century England, but ultimately those considerations are less important to literature professors than the ways the poem differs from all other linguistic constructions, or the ways the poem represents a unique historical event. As Ohmann states:

> Our theories should be the servants, not even of facts, but of the experience that lies beneath the facts. The most ardent literary theorist would be unhappy, I suppose, to have arrived at a point where he could close the books on literature and say, "Here is a set of formulas that account for all poems and their effects upon us." At the end of literary studies resides the work itself, in its complexity and uniqueness. We value the uniqueness above everything else, and wish to

preserve it, even—if a choice has to be made—at the expense of theory. (p. 13)

If Ohmann is right that "knowing" literature is largely a matter of experiencing it, rather than accumulating facts and theories about it, then literary studies should never adopt a scientific model of knowledge building.

Of course Fahnestock and Secor (1988; 1991), MacDonald (1994), and Wilder (2003; 2005) are right that a field must produce new knowledge in order to "play by the rules" of the research university, so literary studies must continue to produce new literary experiences. The review of criticism in Chapter 1 demonstrated how literary scholars have continued to produce new ways of experiencing Donne's "The Flea" and Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" over the past 70 years. Even though the field has continued to produce new interpretations of these poems, these interpretations have not been unconstrained in the way Fahnestock and Secor described. The device of the dramatic speaker and the assumption of organic unity provide continuity to interpretations of these poems, even as the concerns of criticism have shifted to matters such as gender representations. Regardless of the era of criticism, interpretations of these poems have been related to other work in the field, observed (sometimes implicit) standards of evidence, and drawn conclusions about the poems. These conclusions can be thought of as knowledge, but not knowledge in a scientific sense. Knowledge claims about these two poems function more like suggested ways of experiencing the poems than as solutions to disciplinary problems. As shown in Chapter 3, these sanctioned ways of experiencing poems are so deeply ingrained for the professors in this study that even their initial processing is highly "disciplined." To observe these professors read poems is to watch the topoi and

interpretive maneuvers of contemporary criticism of those poems unfold in real time.

If we think of new literary knowledge as new experiences of literature, then teaching must be considered part of literary knowledge building. In his introduction to the published versions of the talks given at the 2004 MLA Presidential Forum, Robert Scholes (2005) states:

> Many scientists learn in order to produce new objects and practical procedures. Most humanists learn in order to teach. It's as simple as that. Which means that we need to evaluate scholarship as it manifests itself in teaching and not just in objects like published books. (p. 8)

Scholes is right, I think, that teaching and scholarship in literary studies should be thought of as interdependent, not because that is "why humanists learn" or because that is why literature professors entered the field; rather, he is right simply because teaching *is* a form of research and publication in literary studies. If to know literature is to experience literature in a certain way, then literary knowledge must be enacted by human beings. The newness of such knowledge can arise from its being never-before-published, but newness can also arise from an experience being new for a specific group of individuals. If we go along with Ohmann (1996) in defining literary research as "disciplined reading and thinking with a view to discovery" (p. 18), and publication as "the submission of research to public review and criticism" (p. 18), then it makes perfect sense to claim, as he does, that "excellent teaching is a legitimate form of research and publication" (p. 18).

The situation is far different in science, which is one reason literary arguments can look bad when rhetoricians analyze them from the perspective of science. A scientist

may be a wonderful teacher; she may even value her teaching more highly than her research and publication. But her teaching does not *constitute* publication of research; her research consists of attempts to make discoveries about objective phenomena, and so her publishing consists of the submission of her research to the *entire* community. What she teaches may be new to her students, but this does not "count" as new knowledge because scientific knowledge exists separately from the individual experience of it. This is why the division of teaching and research, which emerged as part of the science-based research university, only makes sense in science. From the perspective of writing-in-the-disciplines research, scientific articles stand up well when analyzed apart from a teaching context, as contributions to codified knowledge. But literary arguments must be analyzed more holistically, as interwoven with teaching.

At this point one might ask why literary studies is not *just* a teaching subject, why literature professors are expected to publish at a rate comparable to scientists. Of course many literature professors believe publishing demands in the field are too high, particularly with cutbacks among scholarly presses (cf. Greenblatt, 2002). But most literature professors also believe that their scholarship *improves*, rather than detracts from, their teaching. Barry Sarchett (2003), for instance, writing as a faculty member at a school that emphasizes teaching, remarks: "Most of us at liberal arts schools have never seen a conflict between excellent teaching and excellent scholarship; we are likely to see them as mutually dependent" (p. 43). After all, if literature professors keep up with the professional conversation, subject their own interpretations to the scrutiny of colleagues, defend their interpretations through written argument, and put their work in a position to

be criticized, then it seems reasonable to assume they will be more effective instructing their students in these activities.

The sole purpose of my dissertation was to investigate the processes involved in literary scholars' professional writing, and I designed my study accordingly. Still, 7 of 9 participants related their activities to teaching at some point in their protocols, and it was apparent that their inventional processes are similar regardless of whether they are planning to teach or planning to write for colleagues. For example, as Tony brainstormed approaches to "God's Grandeur," his talk shifted back and forth from scholarly to teaching considerations, sometimes without explicit transitions:

> **Tony:** I want to take the subject of the Special Session, which is "The Lyric in Literary Studies," and try to think how all these poems can be fitted together. It's interesting the juxtaposition that this call produces. I would never have thought of "The Flea" in conjunction with "God's Grandeur"—now I do. This has made me think more about the sexual dimension of the Holy Ghost figure at the end of the poem when I perhaps wouldn't otherwise. Is that bird a guy or is that bird a gal? Doves are doves. I've always taught it as such, but now when you teach it in terms of a poem in which there is a male speaker and a female something out there, goddess or whatever, then you obviously look for similarities, and they're not too hard to find.

And consider Jen's attempts to discover an argument about "God's Grandeur." She wanted to discuss Hopkins' innovative poetics, and her consideration of a teaching

context changed only how *far* she would take her argument, not its topic:

> **Jen:** Incredibly intricate poetics. But how do I theorize this? How do I make an argument about it, as opposed to simply close reading it. If I were talking about it for my 316K [a sophomore literature course for non-majors] I probably wouldn't do much more than close read it because they would be very puzzled by it. But if I am arguing about the essential nature of the lyric in some way, do I also talk about the speaker? I'm not sure.

The centrality of teaching to literary study is perhaps best illustrated by Gayl, who, as her thoughts drifted toward teaching, stopped herself to say: "I can't help it, I'm a teacher." These results indicate that Ohmann (1996) is not just being idealistic when he claims that teaching is a legitimate form of research and publication. For professors in this study, teaching considerations are integral to the "disciplined reading" that Ohmann describes as literary research. But like all good rhetoricians, they adjust to meet the needs of their audience when it comes time to make public the results of their research.

Obviously we rhetoricians who study academic writing should follow our investigations wherever they lead. We should not decide beforehand whether to praise or critique a field's style of argument. But we should also remain open to the possibility that future research will revise our understanding of a field's forms of written communication. The more we learn about knowledge making in literary studies, the less justification we find for claims that the discipline is an imposter in the academy or that its forms of argument are flawed. It so happens that our discovery of some of the merits of literary argument comes at a time when this field needs some good news, and old wounds from

the literature/composition divide should not prevent us from delivering it. For many years now the work of rhetoricians has allowed us to say more about what happens on the other side of the English department; now would be a good time for us to start saying what is good about it.

Appendix A: Poetry Familiarity Survey

This survey is intended to identify poems, some that are familiar to you personally and some that are unfamiliar to you and distant from your professional work. This list includes poems that cover a very wide range of familiarity and use, so it is UNLIKELY that you will recognize all the poems. Judge familiarity on the basis of the title and the author; please do not go look at the poems. The survey should take you approximately ten minutes to complete.

Below is a list of 20 poems. Please rate each of them according to:

A. your general familiarity with the poem.
B. the poem's proximity to your area of scholarly writing.

1. John Donne, "The Flea"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

2. William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

3. William Blake, "London"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

4. Geoffrey Chaucer, "To His Scribe Adam"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

5. John Milton, "On Shakespeare"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

6. Rita Dove, "The House Slave"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

7. T.S. Eliot, "Conversation Galante"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

8. William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116 ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds")

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

9. Edgar Allan Poe, "A Dream within a Dream"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

10. William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

11. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

12. John Donne, "Break of Day"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

13. Emily Dickinson, "I heard a Fly buzz--when I died--"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

14. Geoffrey Chaucer, "Gentilesse"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

15. Henry King, "Sonnet: The Double Rock"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

16. William Wordsworth, "There is an Eminence"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

17. William Butler Yeats, "On a Political Prisoner"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

18. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

19. John Milton, "Song: On May Morning"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very close

20. Seamus Heaney, "Punishment"

A.	1 Unfamiliar	2	3 Somewhat unfamiliar	4	5 Familiar	6	7 Very familiar
B.	1 Far	2	3 Somewhat far	4	5 Close	6	7 Very familiar

Appendix B: Milton's "Song: On May Morning"

Song: On May Morning

Now the bright morning Star, Day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her
The Flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose,
  Hail bounteous May that dost inspire
  Mirth and youth and warm desire!
  Woods and Groves are of they dressing,
  Hill and Dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early Song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

John Milton, 1629-31

Appendix C: Eliot's "Conversation Galante"

Conversation Galante

I observe: "Our sentimental friend the moon!
Or possibly (fantastic, I confess)
It may be Prester John's balloon
Or an old battered lantern hung aloft
To light poor travellers to their distress."
  She then: "How you digress!"

  And I then: "Someone frames upon the keys
That exquisite nocturne, with which we explain
The night and moonshine; music which we seize
To body forth our own vacuity."
  She then: "Does this refer to me?"
  "Oh no, it is I who am inane."

  "You, madam, are the eternal humorist,
The eternal enemy of the absolute,
Giving our vagrant moods the slightest twist!
With your air indifferent and imperious
At a stroke our mad poetics to confute—" And—
  "Are we then so serious?"

T.S. Eliot, ca. 1909

Appendix D: Donne's "The Flea"

The Flea

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be.
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
   Yet this enjoys before it woo,
   And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two,
   And this, alas, is more than we would do.

O stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, yea, more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, we're met,
And cloister'd in these living walls of jet.
   Though use make you apt to kill me
   Let not to that self-murder added be,
   And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it suck'd from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thyself nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false fears be:
Just so much honour, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

John Donne, ca. 1600

Appendix E: Hopkins “God’s Grandeur”

God’s Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; Bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1877

Appendix F: Think-Aloud Instructions

Below is a call for papers modeled on those that appear in the *MLA Newsletter* to propose a special session at the upcoming convention. The conceit of this session is that all panelists will address the same four poems. Please read the poems and plan your abstract as if you were going to participate as a panelist in the session.

Think Aloud Instructions

I'd like you to do 3 things:

1. Work on the task as you **normally** would: read, think, jot notes, or just write.

2. While you are reading, thinking to yourself, or writing--please **read and think aloud**, even as you are writing something down. Many people mumble comments to themselves when they read or write--the purpose of a think-aloud session is simply to raise the volume of your mumbling. Don't censor anything.

3. Try to ignore me as much as possible. Don't explain or justify what you are doing. If you fall silent for about 30 seconds, I will prompt you to talk aloud by saying, "please talk."

Practice: please think aloud as you complete the following multiplication problems.

$$\begin{array}{r} 82 \\ \times\ 9 \\ \hline \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 48 \\ \times\ 6 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Special Sessions

The Lyric in Literary Studies. Papers exploring the lyric as represented by Donne's "The Flea," Milton's "Song: On May Morning," Hopkins' "God's Grandeur," and Eliot's "Conversation Galante." 1-page abstracts by 15 May; Jim Warren (jewarren@mail.utexas.edu).

On the four pages following are the four poems.

References

Adorno, T. W. (1974). Lyric poetry and society. *Telos, 20*, 56-71.

Altieri, C. (1990). *Canons and consequences: Reflections on the ethical force of imaginative ideals*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Altieri, C. (1998). Lyrical ethics and literary experience. *Style, 32*(2), 272-298.

Altieri, C. (2001). Taking lyrics literally: Teaching poetry in a prose culture. *New Literary History, 32*, 259-281.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bazerman, C. (1985). Physicists reading physics: Schema-laden purposes and purpose-laden schema. *Written Communication, 2*, 3-24.

Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Becher, T., & Trowler, P. R. (2001). *Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines* (2nd ed.). Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Bell, I. (1983). The role of the lady in Donne's *Songs and Sonets*. *Studies in English Literature, 23*, 113-129.

Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Berkenkotter, C., Huckin, T. N., & Ackerman, J. (1988). Conventions, conversations, and the writer: Case study of a student in a rhetoric Ph.D. program. *Research in the*

Teaching of English, 22(1), 9-44.

Bethell, S. L. (1962). Gracian, Tesauro, and the nature of metaphysical wit. In F. Kermode (Ed.), *Discussions of John Donne* (pp. 136-149). Boston: D.C. Heath & Co.

Blakeslee, A. (1993). Readers and authors: Fictionalized constructs or dynamic collaborations? *Technical Communication Quarterly, 2*, 23-35.

Bleich, D. (1975). *Readings and feelings: An introduction to subjective criticism*. Urbana: NCTE.

Bleich, D. (1978). *Subjective criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Booth, W. (1961). *The rhetoric of fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boyle, R. (1961). *Metaphor in Hopkins*. Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press.

Brooks, C. (1947). *The well wrought urn: Studies in the structure of poetry*. New York: Harvest.

Brooks, C., & Hardy, J. E. (Eds.). (1951). *Poems of Mr. John Milton: The 1645 edition with essays in analysis*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Brooks, C., & Warren, R. P. (1938). *Understanding poetry: An anthology for college students*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Brumble III, H. D. (1973). John Donne's "The Flea": Some implications of the encyclopedic and poetic flea traditions. *Critical Quarterly, 15*, 147-154.

Bump, J. (1982). *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Boston: Twayne.

Bush, D. (1949). The New Criticism: Some old-fashioned queries. *PMLA, 64*(supplement, pt. 2), 18-21.

Carey, J. (1968). *The poems of John Milton*. Harlow: Longmans.

Carrithers, G. H. (1981). Poems (1645): On growing up. *Milton Studies, 15*, 161-179.

Cathcart, D. (1975). *Doubting conscience: Donne and the poetry of moral argument*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Charney, D. (1993). A study in rhetorical reading: How evolutionists read "The Spandrels of San Marco." In J. Selzer (Ed.), *Understanding scientific prose* (pp. 203-231). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Chi, M. T., Glaser, R., & Farr, M. J. (Eds.). (1988). *The nature of expertise*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cotter, J. F. (1972). *Inscape: The Christology and poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Crane, R. S. (1952). *Critics and criticism, ancient and modern*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Crofts, J. E. (1962). John Donne: A consideration. In H. Gardner (Ed.), *John Donne: A collection of critical essays* (pp. 77-89). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Cruttwell, P. (1970). The love poetry of John Donne: Pedantique weedes or fresh invention? In M. Bradbury & D. Palmer (Eds.), *Methaphysical Poetry* (pp. 11-39). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Culler, J. (1975). *Structuralist poetics: Structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Culler, J. (1985). Changes in the study of lyric. In C. Hosek & P. Parker (Eds.), *Lyric poetry: Beyond New Criticism* (pp. 38-54). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Damon, M. (1993). *The dark end of the street: Margins in American vanguard poetry*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

de Man, P. (1984). *The rhetoric of romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dias, P. (1986). Researching response to poetry-part II: What happens when they read a poem. *English Quarterly, 19*, 9-21.

DiPasquale, T. M. (1995). Receiving a sexual sacrament: "The Flea" as profane Eucharist. In R. Frontain & F. M. Malpezzi (Eds.), *John Donne's religious imagination: Essays in honor of John T. Shawcross* (pp. 81-95). Conway, AR: University of Central Arkansas Press.

Docherty, T. (1986). *John Donne, undone*. London: Methuen.

Doniphan, L. (1951). *The poetry of John Donne: A study in explication*. New York: Bookman Associates.

Dowdey, D. (1992). Citation and documentation across the curriculum. In M. Secor & D. Charney (Eds.), *Constructing rhetorical education* (pp. 330-351). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Downing, D. B., Harkin, P., Shumway, D. R., & Sosnoski, J. J. (1987). A conversation with Gerald Graff. *Critical Exchange, 23*, 1-30.

Downing, D. B., & Sosnoski, J. J. (1995). Working with narrative zones in a postdisciplinary pedagogy. *Narrative, 3*(3), 271-286.

Eagleton, T. (1973). Nature and the fall in Hopkins: A reading of "God's Grandeur." *Essays in Criticism, 23*, 68-75.

Earthman, E. A. (1992). Creating the virtual work: Readers' processes in understanding literary texts. *Research in the Teaching of English, 26*, 351-384.

Easthope, A. (1983). *Poetry as discourse*. London: Methuen.

Eliot, T. S. (1932). *Selected essays, 1917-1932*. London: Faber and Faber.

Ellis, V. R. (1991). *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the language of mystery*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Erb, P. (1984). Perichoresis and the poetry of Hopkins. *Hopkins Quarterly, 11*, 67-78.

Ericsson, K. A., & Charness, N. (1994). Expert performance: Its structure and acquisition. *American Psychologist, 49*, 725-747.

Ericsson, K. A., & Simon, H. A. (1993). *Protocol analysis: Verbal reports as data*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Original work published 1984)

Ericsson, K. A., & Smith, J. (1991). Prospects and limits of the empirical study of expertise: An introduction. In K. A. Ericsson & J. Smith (Eds.), *Toward a general theory of expertise: Prospects and limits* (pp. 1-38). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eva-Wood, A. L. (2004a). How think-and-feel-aloud instruction influences poetry readers. *Discourse Processes, 38*(2), 173-192.

Eva-Wood, A. L. (2004b, March). Thinking and feeling poetry: Exploring meanings aloud. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*(1), 182-191.

Fahnestock, J. (1999). *Rhetorical figures in science*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fahnestock, J., & Secor, M. (1988). The stases in scientific and literary argument. *Written Communication, 5*, 427-443.

Fahnestock, J., & Secor, M. (1991). The rhetoric of literary criticism. In C. Bazerman & J. Paradis (Eds.), *Textual dynamics of the professions: Historical and contemporary studies of writing in professional communities* (pp. 76-96). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class?: The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fish, S. E. (1970). Literature in the reader: Affective stylistics. *New Literary History, 2*(1), 123-162.

Flannagan, R. (1998). *The Riverside Milton*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Flower, L. S., & Hayes, J. R. (1980). The cognition of discovery: Defining a rhetorical problem. *College Composition and Communication, 31*(1), 21-32.

Flower, L. S., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). The pregnant pause: An inquiry into the nature of planning. *Research in the Teaching of English, 15*(3), 229-243.

Fowler, A. (1982). *Kinds of literature: An introduction to the theory of genres and modes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Frankfort-Nachmias, C., & Nachmias, D. (1992). *Research methods in the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York: St. Martin's.

Fry, P. H. (1995). *A defense of poetry: Reflections of the occasion of writing*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gardner, W. H. (1966). *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889): A study of poetic idiosyncrasy in relation to poetic tradition* (New ed.). London: Oxford University Press.

Geary, E. A. (1986). T.S. Eliot and the fin de siècle. *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature, 40*, 21-33.

Genette, G. (1992). *The architext: An introduction* (J. E. Lewin, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1979)

Gibson, W. (1950). Authors, speakers, readers, and mock readers. *College English, 11*, 265-269.

Gordon, L. (1977). *Eliot's early years*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Graff, G. (1987). *Professing literature: An institutional history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Graves, B. (1996). The study of literary expertise as a research strategy. *Poetics, 23*, 385-403.

Graves, B., & Frederikson, C. H. (1991). Literary expertise in the description of a fictional narrative. *Poetics, 20*, 1-26.

Greenblatt, S. (2002, May 28). *A special letter from Stephen Greenblatt*. (Available August 16, 2006, from MLA Web site: http://www.mla.org/_pub)

Grierson, H. (1925). *The poems of John Milton: English, Latin, Greek & Italian*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Grotjohn, R. (1991). Gertrude Stein and the prose long poem. *Genre, 24*, 173-189.

Guetzkow, J., Lamont, M., & Mallard, G. (2004, April). What is originality in the humanities and the social sciences? *American Sociological Review, 69*(2), 190-212.

Guillory, J. (2005). Valuing the humanities, evaluating scholarship. *Profession*, 28-38.

Haas, C. (1994). Learning to read biology: One student's rhetorical development in college. *Written Communication, 11*, 43-84.

Haas, C., & Flower, L. (1988). Rhetorical reading strategies and the construction of meaning. *College Composition and Communication, 39*, 167-183.

Hanford, J. H. (1946). *A Milton handbook* (4th ed.). New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Hansen, K. (1988). Rhetoric and epistemology in the social sciences: A contrast of two representative texts. In D. Jolliffe (Ed.), *Advances in writing research* (Vol. 2, pp. 167-210). Norwood: Ablex Publishing.

Harker, W. J. (1994). "Plain sense" and "poetic significance": Tenth-grade readers reading two poems. *Poetics, 22*, 199-218.

Harkin, P. (1987). Arguing a history: Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature*. *Critical Exchange, 23*, 77-90.

Herrington, A. J. (1985). Writing in academic settings: A study of the contexts for writing in two college chemical engineering courses. *Research in the Teaching of English, 19*, 331-361.

Herrington, A. J. (1988). Teaching, writing, and learning: A naturalistic study of writing in an undergraduate literature course. In D. A. Jolliffe (Ed.), *Advances in writing research: Writing in academic disciplines* (Vol. 2, pp. 133-166). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Herrington, A. J. (1992). Composing one's self in a discipline: Students' and teachers' negotiations. In M. Secor & D. Charney (Eds.), *Constructing rhetorical education* (pp. 91-115). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Hester, M. T. (1990). "This cannot be said": A preface to the reader of Donne's lyrics. *Christianity & Literature, 39*, 365-385.

Hoffstaedter, P. (1987). Poetic text processing and its empirical investigation. *Poetics, 16*, 75-91.

Holland, N. (1975). *5 readers reading*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hollander, J. (1985). *Vision and resonance: Two senses of poetic form* (2nd ed.). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hughes, M. Y. (1957). *John Milton: Complete poems and major prose*. New York: Odyssey.

Hyland, K. (2001). Bringing in the reader: Addressee features in academic articles. *Written Communication, 18*(4), 549-574.

Iser, W. (1974). *The implied reader: Patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Jackson, V. (2005). *Dickinson's misery: A theory of lyric reading*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jeffreys, M. (1995, March). Ideologies of lyric: A problem of genre in contemporary Anglophone poetics. *PMLA, 110*(2), 196-205.

Johnson, W. R. (1982). *The idea of lyric: Lyric modes in ancient and modern poetry*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kalaidjian, W. (1989). *Languages of liberation: The social text in contemporary American poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kaufer, D. S., & Geisler, C. (1989, July). Novelty in academic writing. *Written Communication, 6*(3), 286-311.

Kincaid, J. R. (1978). "Why unblooms the best hope?": Victorian narrative forms and the explanation of calamity. *Victorian Newsletter, 53*, 1-4.

Kintgen, E. R. (1983). *The perception of poetry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Knapp, J. V. (2002, May). Teaching poetry via HEI (Hypoethesis-Experiment-Instruction). *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy , 45*(8), 718-729.

Lackey, M. (2001). "God's Grandeur": Gerard Manley Hopkins' reply to the speculative atheist. *Victorian Poetry, 39*(1), 83-90.

Larocco, S. (1995). Contentious intimations: John Donne, Richard III, and the transgressive. *Exemplaria, 7*, 237-267.

Larson, D. A. (1989). *John Donne and twentieth-century criticism*. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Leinhardt, G., & Young, K. M. (1996). Two texts, three readers: Distance and expertise in reading history. *Cognition and Instruction, 14*(4), 441-486.

Leishman, J. B. (1969). *Milton's minor poems*. London: Hutchinson.

Li, V. P. (1984). Narcissism and the limits of the lyric self. In R. Chatterjee & C. Nicholson (Eds.), *Tropic crucible: Self and theory in language and literature* (pp. 3-23). Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Lundeberg, M. A. (1987). Metacognitive aspects of reading comprehension: Studying understanding in legal case analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly, 22*, 407-432.

Luxon, T. H. (n.d.). Song: On May morning. In *The Milton reading room*. (Available August 16, 2006, from Dartmouth University Web site: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/_room/_morning/)

MacDonald, S. P. (1987). Problem definition in academic writing. *College English, 49*, 315-331.

MacDonald, S. P. (1989). Data-driven and conceptually driven academic discourse. *Written Communication, 6*, 411-455.

MacDonald, S. P. (1992). A method for analyzing sentence-level differences in disciplinary knowledge making. *Written Communication, 9*(4), 533-569.

MacDonald, S. P. (1994). *Professional academic writing in the humanities and social sciences*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

MacNealy, M. S. (1999). *Strategies for empirical research in writing*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

MacPhail, S. (2002). Lyric nationalism: Whitman, American studies, and the New Criticism. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 44*(2), 133-160.

Madison, A. L. (1957). Explication of John Donne's "The Flea." *Notes and Queries, 202*(4), 60-61.

Mailloux, S. (1982). *Interpretive conventions: The reader in the study of American fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mailloux, S. (1989). *Rhetorical power*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mailloux, S. (1990). The turns of reader-response criticism. In C. Moran & E. F. Penfield (Eds.), *Conversations: Contemporary critical theory and the teaching of literature* (pp. 38-54). Urbana: NCTE.

Mariani, P. L. (1970). *A commentary on the complete poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Marotti, A. F. (1986). *John Donne, coterie poet*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Maxwell, D. (1952). *The poetry of T.S. Eliot*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.

McCanles, M. (1966). Paradox in Donne. *Studies in the Renaissance, 13*, 266-287.

Menand, L. (2005). Dangers within and without. *Profession*, 10-17.

Mueller, J. (1994). Women among the metaphysicals: A case, mostly, of being Donne for. In A. Marotti (Ed.), *Critical essays on John Donne* (pp. 37-48). New York: G.K. Hall.

Myers, G. (1990). *Writing biology: Texts in the social construction of scientific knowledge*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Newell, A., & Simon, H. A. (1972). *Human problem solving*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Ohmann, R. M. (1996). *English in America: A radical view of the profession*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. (Original work published 1967)

Parker, W. R. (1968). *Milton: A biography*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Patel, V. L., & Groen, G. J. (1991). The general and specific nature of medical expertise: A critical look. In *Toward a general theory of expertise: Prospects and limits* (pp. 93-125). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Patrick, J. (1985). Going round versus going straight to meaning: The puzzles of Auden's "Our Bias." In C. Hosek & P. Parker (Eds.), *Lyric poetry: Beyond New Criticism* (pp. 281-297). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Penrose, A. M., & Geisler, C. (1994). Reading and writing without authority. *College Composition and Communication, 45*, 505-520.

Perelman, C., & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969). *The new rhetoric: A treatise on argumentation.* (J. Wilkinson & P. Weaver, Trans.). Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press.

Perrine, L. (1963). *Sound and sense: An introduction to poetry* (2nd ed.). New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Perrine, L. (1990). Explicating Donne: "The Apparition" and "The Flea." *College Literature, 17*, 1-20.

Peskin, J. (1998). Constructing meaning when reading poetry: An expert-novice study. *Cognition and Instruction, 16*(3), 235-263.

Pinion, F. B. (1986). *A T.S. Eliot companion: Life and works*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Pinkney, T. (1984). *Women in the poetry of T.S. Eliot: A psychoanalytic approach*. London: MacMillan.

Poovey, M. (2001, Spring). The model system of contemporary literary criticism. *Critical Inquiry, 27*(3), 408-438.

Pressley, M., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). *Verbal protocols of reading: The nature of constructively responsive reading*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Proffitt, E. (1977). Hopkins' "ooze of oil" once more. *Concerning Poetry, 10*(2), 61-64.

Rackin, D. (1980). "God's Grandeur": Hopkins' sermon to Wordsworth. *The Wordsworth Circle, 11*(2), 66-73.

Ransom, J. C. (1938). *The world's body*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

Raynie, S. A. (2001). The woman's body and the obstacle of specious honor in Donne's "The Flea." *English Language Notes, 38*(3), 40-52.

Rees, T. R. (1974). *The technique of T. S. Eliot: A study of the orchestration of meaning in Eliot's poetry*. The Hague: Mouton.

Richards, I. A. (1929). *Practical criticism: A study of literary judgment*. London: Paul, Trench, Trubner.

Richards, I. A. (1929). *Practical criticism: A study of literary judgment*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company.

Richardson, A. (2000). The eugenization of love: Sarah Grand and the morality of genealogy. *Victorian Studies, 42*(2), 227-254.

Richmond, H. M. (1964). *The school of love: The evolution of the Stuart love lyric*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Roseblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1938). *Literature as exploration*. New York: Appleton-Century.

Roston, M. (1974). *The soul of wit: A study of John Donne*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

Roth, W. M., & Bowen, G. M. (2003). When are graphs worth ten thousand words? An expert-expert study. *Cognition and Instruction, 21*(4), 429-473.

Roussel, R. (1986). *The conversation of the sexes: Seduction and equality in selected seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rudnytsky, P. L. (1982). "The Sight of God": Donne's poetics of transcendence. *Texas Studies in Language & Literature, 24*(2), 185-207.

Saiz, P. (1989). Deconstruction and the lyric. In R. Grimm & J. Hermand (Eds.), *From ode to anthem: Problems of lyric poetry* (pp. 193-249). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Sarchett, B. (2003). Preprofessionalism and disciplinarity. *ADE Bulletin, 133*, 42-46.

Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1991). Literate expertise. In K. A. Ericsson & J. Smith (Eds.), *Toward a general theory of expertise* (pp. 172-194). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Scarry, E. (1988). *Literature and the body: Essays on populations and persons*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Schoenfeld, A. H. (1985). *Mathematical problem solving*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Scholes, R. (2005). Whither, or wither, the humanities? *Profession*, 7-9.

Schuchard, R. (1999). *Eliot's dark angel: Intersections of life and art*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shanahan, C. M. (1953). Irony in Laforgue, Corbière, and Eliot. *Modern Philology, 53*(2), 117-128.

Shawcross, J. T. (1963). *The complete English poetry of John Milton*. New York: New York University Press.

Shimron, J. (1980). Psychological processes behind the comprehension of a poetic text. *Instructional Science, 9*, 43-66.

Sigg, E. (1989). *The American T.S. Eliot: A study of the early writings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Simon, H. A. (1973). The structure of ill-structured problems. *Artificial Intelligence, 4*, 181-202.

Slakey, R. L. (1969). The grandeur in Hopkins' "God's Grandeur." *Victorian Poetry, 7*, 159-163.

Slakey, R. L. (1996). "God's Grandeur" and divine impersoning. *Victorian Poetry, 34*(1), 73-85.

Smith, A. J. (1972). *John Donne, essays in celebration*. London: Methuen.

Smith, B. H. (2005). Figuring and reconfiguring the humanities and social sciences. *Profession*, 18-27.

Sosnoski, J. J. (1994). *Token professionals and master critics: A critique of orthodoxy in literary studies*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sosnoski, J. J. (1995). *Modern skeletons in postmodern closets: A cultural studies alternative*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Spacks, P. M. (1968). In search of sincerity. *College English, 29*, 591-602.

Spanos, W. V. (1993). *The end of education: Toward posthumanism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Svensson, C. (1987). The construction of poetic meaning. *Poetics, 16*, 471-503.

Thompson, E. (1963). *T.S. Eliot: The metaphysical perspective*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Thurston, M. (2000). Robert Lowell's monumental vision: History, form, and the cultural work of postwar American lyric. *American Literary History, 12*(1-2), 79-112.

Tillyard, E. (1930). *Milton*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Toulmin, S. (1972). *Human understanding: The collective use and evolution of concepts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Unger, L. (1966). *T.S. Eliot: Moments and patterns*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Vendler, H. (1995). *The given and the made: Strategies of poetic redefinition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Viehoff, R. (1986). How to construct a literary poem? *Poetics, 15*, 287-306.

Villeponteaux, E. (2002). Flashing foil and oozing oil: Trinitarian images in the first quatrain of "God's Grandeur." *Victorian Poetry, 40*(2), 201-208.

Walker, J. (1989). Aristotle's lyric: Re-Imagining the rhetoric of epideictic song. *College English, 51*, 5-28.

Walker, J. (2000). *Rhetoric and poetics in antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, G. M. (1966). Hopkins' "God's Grandeur": A poetic statement of Christian doctrine. *Victorian Poetry, 4*(4), 284-287.

White, H. C. (1999). Morals, manners, and "Marriage": Marianne Moore's art of conversation. *Twentieth Century Literature, 45*(4), 488-510.

Wiggins, P. D. (1981-1982). Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's Trattato Dell'arte Della pittura, Scultura, e Architettura and John Donne's poetics: "The Flea" and "Aire and Angels" as portrait miniatures in the style of Nicholas Hilliard. *Studies in Iconography, 7-8*, 269-288.

Wilder, L. (2002). "Get comfortable with uncertainty": A study of the conventional values of literary analysis in an undergraduate literature course. *Written Communication, 19*(1), 175-221.

Wilder, L. (2003). Critics, classrooms, and commonplaces: Literary studies as a disciplinary discourse community. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 64*(12), 4450A. (UMI No. AAT 3116231)

Wilder, L. (2005). "The Rhetoric of Literary Criticism" revisited: Mistaken critics, complex contexts, and social justice. *Written Communication, 22*(1), 76-119.

Wilson, D. B. (1971). *La Puce de Madame Desroches* and John Donne's "The Flea." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen , 72*, 297-301.

Wimsatt, W. K., & Beardsley, M. C. (1946). The intentional fallacy. *Sewanee Review, 54*, 468-488.

Wineburg, S. (1991). On the reading of historical texts: Notes on the breach between school and academy. *American Educational Research Journal, 28*, 495-519.

Wineburg, S. (1998). Reading Abraham Lincoln: An expert/study in the interpretation of historical texts. *Cognitive Science, 22*(3), 319-346.

Wineburg, S. S. (1994). The cognitive representation of historical texts. In G. Leinhardt, I. L. Beck, & C. Stainton (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in history* (pp. 85-135). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Winny, J. (1970). *A preface to Donne*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Winsor, D. (1996). *Writing like an engineer: A rhetorical education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wolfe, J. (2003). A method for teaching invention in the gateway literature class. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture, 3*(3), 399-425.

Woodhouse, A. (1972). *The heavenly muse: A preface to Milton* (H. MacCallum, Ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Wright, B. (1951). Hopkins' "God's Grandeur." *Explicator, 10*(1), item 5.

Wright, B. A. (1980). *John Milton: The complete poems*. London: Dent.

Wyatt, D., Pressley, M., El-Dinary, P. B., Stein, S., Evans, P., & Brown, R. (1993). Comprehension strategies, worth and credibility monitoring, and evaluations: Cold and hot cognition when experts read professional articles that are important to them. *Learning and Individual Differences, 5*(1), 49-72.

VITA

James Edward Warren, Jr., was born in Blytheville, Arkansas on March 19, 1972, the son of Nancy P. Warren and James Edward Warren. After graduating from Norman High School, Norman, Oklahoma, in 1990, he enrolled in the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, in 1994. He pursued major coursework in English and minor coursework in classics. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts with distinction in May 1997. In August 1997, he entered the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia to study British Romanticism in the English department. He wrote a Master's thesis on William Blake and received the degree of Master of Arts in August 1999. In August 1999, he entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin to continue studying British Romanticism in the English department. In August 2002, he changed to the Ph.D. Concentration in Rhetoric and Composition. While at the University of Texas at Austin he taught first-year and advanced undergraduate writing courses through the Division of Rhetoric and Writing (formerly the Division of Rhetoric and Composition) and an introductory literature course through the English Department. A revision of Chapter 4 of this dissertation was published in the April 2006 *Written Communication*.

Permanent Address: 2409 Trailside Drive, Unit B, Austin, TX 78704

This dissertation was typed by the author.